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New Conversations

Voices of Indigenous People



Native Hawaiians

Native Americans

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New Conversations

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Conversation Piece: Voices of Indigenous People

Nanette M.
Roberts

Editor

NEW CONVERSATIONS

This issue of *NEW CONVERSATIONS* is entirely devoted to voices of indigenous people—in this instance, Native Hawaiians, whom I interviewed in Hawai'i, and Native Americans, most of whose words were transcribed from videotapes of their presentations at the National Gathering of American Indian UCC Members, held in Bismarck, N.D., in June of 1995. It is my belief that these varied modes of presentation give this issue an unusual breadth and immediacy.

My original intention had been to separate the essays neatly into Native Hawaiian and Native American groupings. But it became clear once all the material was in hand that there were similarities of experience that called for a different presentation. Thus we have begun with George Tinker's extraordinary essay describing indigenous peoples as a "fourth world" entity and exploring the inadequacy of "first world" formulations to fully understand indigenous experience. Tinker's emphasis on the role of *land* in the spiritual lives of indigenous people is echoed everywhere in the essays which follow.

Kekapa Lee's personal but, we believe, representative expression of growing up as a Christian Native Hawaiian gives readers a sense of the loss of identity which accompanies the growth of a new sense of self, and the ambivalences

which inevitably result. The section on Native Hawaiians ends with the interview with Apela and Keola Sequeria, which forms a natural bridge, since Apela is a Native American and Keola a Native Hawaiian. Interviewing them and all the others was an honor for this interviewer which she will not soon forget.

The striking similarities in the experiences of both groups as colonized people should not lead to easy generalizations. Each is a "host people" which found its hospitality cruelly abused by its guests. Each became disinherited in its own land, and finds now that every aspect of its culture has been affected by the intrusive force which came to dominate their land. Each was denied the use of their own language or even the power of naming. Each is trying to recapture its own culture, to reassert its value and its integrity. Yet both groups are fully aware of the ways in which they have been altered, perhaps irrevocably, by the encounter with triumphalist Christianity and colonialism.

In Hawai'i the struggle for sovereignty forms the focus for the recovery of indigenous identity, and is a major emphasis of the interviews. Yet among the Hawaiians there are marked differences about what sovereignty means and/or how it is to be achieved. We who

watch their struggle must take seriously the frequent warning that our role as European Americans is to observe and to support wherever possible, but to leave to the Hawaiians themselves the task of defining their own future.

The Hollywood vision of "Blue Hawaii" and hula girls colors our view of that exotic land, just as "cowboys and Indians" (or the Indian as spiritual guru) has limited our view of the Native American. Commanche essayist Paul Chaat Smith has described modern Native American experience as "fantastic and surreal." With some tribes becoming rich on the proceeds of gambling, Native Americans are still the poorest and least healthy group in North America, just as Native Hawaiians are still the poorest and sickest group in Hawai'i. "While vision-quest retreats and sweat-lodge vacations are offered" in American magazines, we can't get Americans to rename their baseball teams. Smith could well be speaking of both groups when, referring to the dominant society, he charges,

The country can't make up its mind. One decade we're invisible, another dangerous... [First we're] obsolete and quaint... then suddenly we're cool and mysterious. Once considered so primitive that our status as fully human was a subject of scientific

debate, some now regard us as keepers of planetary secrets and the only salvation for a world bent on destroying itself. . . .

We're trapped in history. No escape. (*Strong Hearts: Native American Visions and Voices*, Aperture, n.d., p. 9)

We in the dominant culture must

realize that we are in history with them, although ours are clearly the best seats. We need to reject the easy response of wide-eyed and factitious imitation of all things "native"; to acknowledge our ignorance about their cultures; and to understand the destruction visited upon these people as a consequence of their

encounter with the West. Yet as we respond we must, for once, learn to let them decide how to proceed, knowing only that the call for justice which echoes through our faith is clearly to be heard in the voices of these representatives of our country's first inhabitants. May it be acted upon just as clearly. □

The Full Circle of Liberation— An American Theology of Place

George Tinker

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This is a challenge to hear the voices of indigenous peoples. We make up a Fourth World, if you will, oppressed both by the powerful nations and by the so-called developing nations. As Fourth World peoples we share with our Third World relatives the hunger, poverty, and repression that have been the continuing common experience of those overpowered by the expansionism of European adventurers and their missionaries 500 years ago.

What distinguishes Fourth World indigenous peoples from Third World peoples, however, are deeper, more hidden, but no less deadly effects of colonialism that impact our distinct cultures in dramatically different ways. These effects are especially felt in the indigenous spiritual experience, and our struggle for liberation is within the context of this distinctive spirituality.

Our liberation struggle has been overlooked, until recently, in Third World liberation theology models of social change, which often remained inappropriate and ineffective in the struggle of indigenous people for self-determination. In fact, most liberation theologies' themes were derived

from the very modes of discourse of the Western academy against which indigenous peoples have struggled for centuries. These modes—whether theological, legal, political, economic, or even the so-called social sciences—have shaped colonial, neocolonial, and now Marxist regimes that, in the name of development, modernization, or even solidarity, have inflicted spiritual genocide on Fourth World peoples.

Gustavo Gutierrez, the foremost thinker on liberation theology, argues four important points: 1) liberation theology should focus on the "nonperson" rather than on the nonbeliever; 2) liberation theology is a historical project that sees God as revealed in history; 3) liberation theology makes a revolutionary socialist choice on behalf of the poor, and 4) liberation theology emerges out of the praxis of the people. The latter emphasis on praxis is perhaps the most enduring and pervasive gift of liberation theology.

However, a Native American theology finds the emphasis on the historical unsuitable and begins with a much different understanding of Gutierrez' category of the nonperson. Moreover, Native

American culture and spirituality implies different political solutions from those currently imposed by any socialist paradigm. In the context of these differences, my hope is for constructive dialogue leading to mutual understanding and solidarity between Third and Fourth World peoples and an advance of genuine and wholistic liberation.

Resistance to Class Categories

In an early essay in the progressive theology journal *Concilium*, Gutierrez described the meaning of the "nonperson" in language that strongly distinguished the concern of liberation theology from the rest of modern theology:

Much contemporary theology seems to start from the challenge of the nonbeliever. He [or she] questions our religious world and faces it with a demand for profound purification and renewal. . . . This challenge in a continent like Latin America is not from the man who does not believe, but from the man who is not a man, who is not recognized as such by the existing social order: He is in the ranks of the poor, the exploited; he is the man who is systematically and legally despoiled of his being as a man, who scarcely knows that he is a man. His challenge is not aimed first at our religious world, but

George Tinker is also Associate Pastor of Living Waters, an Episcopal-Lutheran Indian parish. The paper is adapted from a speech given at the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians meeting, Nairobi, Kenya, January 1992.

at our economic, social, political and cultural world; therefore it is an appeal for the revolutionary transformation; of the very bases of a dehumanizing society. . . . What is implied in telling this man who is not a man that he is a son of God?

This powerful statement names the alienation of marginalized poor and oppressed peoples and the impetus for a liberation theology response to people who suffer under unjust systems. However, it falls short in naming the particularities of indigenous peoples' suffering of non-personhood. The very affirmation of Third World "nonpersons" tends to continue what has been, in praxis, a disaffirmation of indigenous people for now 500 years in the Americas.

While he avoids the language of explicit political programs, Gutierrez like other Latin American theologians, explicitly and implicitly identifies the preferential option for the poor with socialist and even implied Marxist solutions that analyze the poor in terms of social class structure. This overlooks the crucial point that indigenous peoples experience their very personhood in terms of their relationship to the land. These theologians' analyses are powerful and effective to a point, but by reducing the nonperson to a class of people that share certain

universal attributes, some more telling attributes are disregarded.

Native American peoples resist categorization in terms of class structure. Instead, we insist on being recognized as "peoples," even nations, with a claim to national sovereignty based on ancient title to our land. Classification, whether as "working class" or "the poor," continues the erosion of our cultural integrity and national agenda. As much as capitalist economic structures—including the church (missionaries) and the academy (anthropologists)—have reduced Native American peoples to non-personhood, so too the Marxist agenda fails finally to recognize our distinct personhood.

Reducing our nationness to classness imposes upon us a particular culture of poverty and especially a culture of labor. It begs the question as to whether indigenous peoples desire production in the modern economic sense in the first place. To put the means of production into the hands of the poor eventually makes the poor exploiters of indigenous peoples and their natural resources. Finally, it seriously risks violating the very spiritual values that hold an indigenous cultural group together as a people. This is not to suggest simply discarding Marxist or other tools of analysis. Rather, this is a constructive critique of

these tools and the implicit hegemony they exercise in much of . . . the Third World.

The failure to recognize the distinct personhood of Native American peoples has a history as long as the history of European colonialism and missionary outreach in the Americas. In particular, it should be noted that the church's failure to recognize the personhood of Native Americans was the most devastating. Less direct than the military (yet always accompanied by it), missionaries consistently confused the gospel of Jesus Christ with the gospel of European cultural values and social structures. They saw our cultures and our social structures as inadequate and needing to be replaced with what they called a "Christian civilization."

Many liberation theology and socialist movements in general promise no better than the continued cultural genocide of indigenous peoples. From an American Indian perspective, the problem with modern liberation theology, as with Marxist political movements, is that class analysis gets in the way of recognizing cultural discreetness and even personhood. Small but culturally unique communities stand to be swallowed up by the vision of a classless society, of an international workers' movement, or of a bur-

geoning majority of Third World urban poor. This too is cultural genocide and signifies that indigenous peoples are yet nonpersons, even in the light of the gospel of liberation.

God in Place and Time

In *The Power of the Poor in History*, Gutierrez argues that God reveals God's self in history. I assert that this is not only not a self-evident truth, but that Native American theology that is true to our culture must begin with a confession that is both dramatically different from and exclusive of Gutierrez' starting point. Essentially, a Native American theology must argue out of spiritual experience and praxis that God reveals God's self in creation, in space or place and not in time.

The Western sense of history as a linear temporal process means that those who heard the gospel first have and always maintain a critical advantage over those of us who hear it later and have to rely on those who heard it first to give us a full interpretation. This has been our consistent experience with the gospel as it has been preached to us by the missionaries of all the denominations, just as it has been our experience with the political visions proclaimed to us by the revolutionaries. The problem, from 16th-century historian

Las Casas to Marx, is the assumption of a hegemonic trajectory through history that fails to recognize cultural distinctions. With the best of intentions, solutions to oppressed peoples' suffering are proposed as exclusive programs that don't allow for diverse possibilities.

Whatever the conqueror's commitment, to evangelization and conversion or to military subjugation and destruction, it was necessary to make the conquest decisive—at military, political, economic, social, legal, and religious levels. And just as the conquest had to be decisive, so too must modern revolutions be decisive. They allow no room for peoples who consider themselves distinct—economically, politically, socially, and culturally—to find their own revolution or liberation.

A prime example was the situation of the Miskito Indians in Nicaragua during the Sandinista revolution. Summarily relocated from their coastal territories, where they had self-sustaining local economies, to high-altitude communal coffee plantations, Miskito peoples were forced to labor as culturally amorphous workers with no regard to the abject cultural dislocation they had suffered. The Miskito Indians had been a people; the removal from their land reduced them to a class whose cultural identity could not be a factor.

Whether in capitalist or socialist guise, then, history and temporality reign supreme in the West. On the other hand, Native American spirituality and values, social and political structures, and even ethics are rooted not in some temporal notion of history but in spatiality. This is perhaps the most dramatic (and largely unnoticed) cultural difference between Native American thought and the Western intellectual tradition.

The question is not whether time or space is missing in one culture or the other, but which is dominant. Of course Native Americans have a temporal awareness, but it is subordinate to our sense of place. Likewise, the Western tradition has a spatial awareness, but it lacks the priority of the temporal. Hence, progress, history, development, evolution, and process become key notions that invade all academic discourse in the West, from science and economics to philosophy and theology. History becomes the quintessential Western intellectual device.

If Marxist thinking and the notion of a historical dialectic were finally proven correct, then American Indian people and all indigenous peoples would be doomed. Our cultures and value systems, our spirituality, and even our social structures, would give way to an emergent socialist structure

that would impose a notion of the good on all people regardless of ethnicity or culture.

Drawn Together in Creation

One could argue with Native American peoples that we must learn to compromise with the "real world," that to pursue our own cultural affectations is to swim upstream against the current of the modern socioeconomic world system. When rightists or capitalists of any shade assert this, I know they are arguing the self-interest or prerogatives of those who own the system. When Third or Fourth World peoples make the argument, I am curious how readily some of us concede to Western categories of discourse. How easily we internalize the assumption that Western, Euro-American philosophical, theological, economic, social, spiritual, and political systems are necessarily definitive of any and all conceivable "real" worlds.

Native Americans think that our perception of the world is just as adequate, perhaps more satisfying, and certainly more egalitarian than the West's. In order to sense the power of our culturally integrated structures of cognition, a beginning understanding of Native American spirituality is necessary, for all of existence is spiritual for us. That is our universal start-

ing point, even though we represent a multitude of related cultures, with a great variety of tribal ceremonial structures expressing that spirituality.

That the primary metaphor of existence for Native Americans is spatial does much to explain the fact that American Indian spirituality and American Indian existence itself are deeply rooted in the land, and why our conquest and removal from our lands was so culturally and genocidally destructive to our tribes. There is, however, a more subtle level to this sense of spatiality and land rootedness. It shows up in nearly all aspects of our existence, in our ceremonial structures, our symbols, our architecture, and in the symbolic parameters of a tribe's universe.

The fundamental symbol of Plains Indians' existence is the circle, a symbol signifying the family, the clan, the tribe, and eventually all of creation. Because it has no beginning and no end, all in the circle are of equal value. In its form as a medicine wheel, with two lines forming a cross inscribed vertically and horizontally across its whole, the circle can symbolize the four directions of the Earth, and more important, the four manifestations of Wankonta (the Sacred Mystery, Creator, God) that come to us from these directions. Native American

egalitarian tendencies are worked out in this spatial symbol in ways that go far beyond the classless egalitarianism of socialism.

In one layer of meaning, these four directions hold together in the same equal balance the four nations of Two-leggeds, Four-leggeds, Wingeds, and Living-moving Things—encompassing all that is created, the trees and rocks, mountains and rivers, as well as animals. Human beings lose their status of primacy and "dominion." In other words, American Indians are driven implicitly and explicitly by their culture and spirituality to recognize the personhood of all "things" in creation. When the Lakota peoples pray *Mitakuye ouyasin*, "For all my relatives," they understand relatives to include not just tribal members, but all of creation.

This matrix of cultural response to the world that we might call spirituality continues to have life today in North America among our various Indian tribes, even for those who remain in the church and continue to call themselves Christian. More and more frequently today, Indian Christians are holding on to the old traditions as their way of life and claiming the freedom of the gospel to honor and practice them as integral to their inculturated expression of Christianity.

Today there can be no genuine American Indian theology that does not take our indigenous traditions seriously. This means, of course, that our reading of the gospel and our understanding of faithfulness will represent a radical disjuncture from the theologies and histories of the Western churches of Europe and American—as we pay attention to our stories and memories instead of to theirs.

This inculturation of an indigenous theology is symbolic of American Indian resistance and struggle today. More than symbolic, it gives life to the people. However, we also see the possibility that our interpretations can prove renewing, redeeming, and salvific for Western theology and ecclesiology. An American Indian theology coupled with an American Indian reading of the gospel might provide the theological imagination to generate a more immediate and attainable vision of a just and peaceful world. Respect for creation must necessarily result in justice, just as genuine justice necessarily is the achievement of peace.

We understand repentance as a call to be liberated from our perceived need to be God and instead to assume our rightful place in the world as humble human beings in the circle of creation with all the other created. While Euro-cultural

scholars have offered consistently temporal interpretations of the gospel concept *basileia* (*kingdom*) of God, an American Indian interpretation builds on a spatial understanding rooted in creation. If *basileia* has to do with God's hegemony, where else is God actually to reign if not in the entirety of the place that God has created?

While God revealing God's self in history holds out some promise for achieving justice and peace in some eventual future moment, the historical/temporal impetus must necessarily delay any full realization of the *basileia* of God. Instead, American Indian spirituality calls us to image ourselves here and now as mere participants in the whole of creation, with respect for and reciprocity with all of creation, and not somehow apart from it and free to use it up at will. The latter is a mistake that was and is epidemic in both the First and Second Worlds and has been recklessly imposed on the rest of us in the name of development.

This understanding of *basileia* and repentance mandates new social and political structures, genuinely different from those created by either of the dominant Euro-cultural structures of capitalism or socialism. The competition generated by Western individualism, temporality, and paradigms of

history, progress, and development must give way to the communal notion of interrelatedness and reciprocity.

I am not espousing a value-neutral creation theology in the style of Matthew Fox or a New Age spirituality of feel-good individualism. Rather, ultimately this is an expression of a "theology of community" that must generate a consistent interest in justice and peace. If I image myself as a vital part of a community, indeed as a part of many communities, it becomes more difficult for me to act in ways that are destructive of these communities. The desire or perceived necessity for exerting social, political, economic, or spiritual control over each other gives way to mutual respect, not just for individuals, but for our culturally distinct communities.

If we believe we are all relatives in this world, then we must live together differently than we have. Justice and peace, in this context, emerge almost naturally out of a self-imaging as part of the whole, as part of an ever-expanding community that begins with family and tribe, but is finally inclusive of all human beings and all of creation. Such is the spirit of hope that marks the American Indian struggle of resistance in the midst of a world of pain. □

A Native Hawaiian Shares *Mana`o* on Sovereignty

This article is my *mana`o* or reflection as an indigenous Hawaiian and United Church of Christ pastor serving a Hawaiian congregation in Lahaina, Maui, Hawai`i. The word *mana`o* in Hawaiian means "thought, idea, opinion, mind." We Hawaiian people are aliens in our homeland (at least, that is how some of us feel). The Hawaiians are among the peoples of the Pacific Islands who were colonized in the westward expansion of the United States, led by its concept of Manifest Destiny. Hawai`i was illegally taken over by the overthrow of our legal monarch, Queen Lili`uokalani, who was overthrown by business interests led by a group of men who were for the most part citizens of the United States. In 1898 we were annexed to the United States and became the Territory of Hawai`i. In 1959, we became the fiftieth state of the United States.

The talk about sovereignty for Hawaiians has caused a lot of discussion and emotions to rise to the surface. It has not been easy, yet I see hopeful signs of dialogue as our people debate the question of sovereignty in and out of the church community. What follows is my personal reflection on sovereignty—the past, present, and possible future.

The Past

I was born in Hawai`i when Hawai`i

was a territory. I too celebrated in 1959 when Hawai`i became a state. I accepted the fact that I was an American who had Hawaiian blood. I also served in the U.S. Army and spent one year in Vietnam.

My story is similar to that of other indigenous peoples of the world who have been overcome by European and American missionaries and by other western influences. My ethnicity is over one-half Hawaiian, part Chinese, and part Russian. I attended the Kamehameha Schools in Honolulu, a private boarding high school only for Hawaiian children. I was taught to be American but also to appreciate my being Hawaiian. Hawaiian history was taught along with American history; yet the story of the overthrow of the sovereign Queen Lili`uokalani and her Royal Government was glossed over. I began to come to terms with all this history in 1992 as I started to prepare for the January 1993 apology to the Hawaiian people (as voted by the UCC General Synod).

Presently, I am serving as *Kahu* (pastor) to the Waiola Church. The church was founded in 1823 by missionaries brought to Lahaina by the Sacred High Chieftess Keopuolani, sacred wife of Kamehameha I. She was baptized into the Christian faith in 1823, and died that same year. The church today is struggling to understand

what role the larger church took in the events leading to the overthrow and to the events following. We are the church that excommunicated the Sacred High Chieftess' daughter, Princess Nahi`ena`ena, over the clash between the Christian faith and her Hawaiian cultural practices. We are also the church that was burned down on June 28, 1894, when the *Kahu* (pastor) was part of a group which advocated the abolition of the monarchy. We are not facing our history well, and are uncomfortable as we begin to understand that it was the descendants of our missionaries and members of our churches who had direct roles in the overthrow in 1893.

As I was growing up in Hawai`i, I felt that I was inferior because I was Hawaiian. The stereotype of Hawaiians in the 1960s was not encouraging. Our people even hid their Hawaiian identity: they claimed they were not Hawaiian, or that they were only part Hawaiian, or that they were of another race, or that they were Americans. Pride among our people was zero. To other cultures in Hawai`i, we Hawaiians appeared to lack ambition and motivation. We were judged by American standards to which we didn't measure up. Other cultures and races acclimated to the American style of speech or dialect, in order to get

Kekapa Lee

*Kahu [Pastor]
Waiola Church, UCC
Lahaina, Maui*

away from the stereotypes. For me, education (although American) was the way to be more accepted in the larger culture and to "make something of myself." I wanted to show my teachers and others that I could make it in their world and society. I adopted their ways and became like them. I was still Hawaiian, but I had to become bi-cultural in order to survive.

Hawai'i became "Christianized" by the missionaries of our American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM), the predecessor of the United Church Board for World Ministries (UCBWM). In fact, Hawai'i had the largest church in the world in the mid-1800s, the Haili Church in Hilo, Hawai'i, which had 10,000 members. But these same missionaries who brought God's word to our islands of Hawai'i also brought their Puritan New England culture with them, and viewed us as "heathens" who needed to be saved.

What happened to us is similar to the experiences of many other indigenous peoples of the world colonized by European peoples. Much of our Hawaiian culture did not survive the onslaught of this new American, New England thinking. The puritanical missionaries tried to do away with our culture to get us to accept the Christian way. Little did they understand how many "Christian

values" the Hawaiian culture already had. Up to the 1950s our people were punished by their teachers if they spoke the Hawaiian language. They had to sneak away from school to speak their mother tongue secretly. Much of our culture has been lost due to the colonization and Americanization of our people and islands.

Many of our people took their native Hawaiian cultural knowledge, taught to them by the *kahuna* (priests) and other teachers, with them to the grave. My grandmother came from a long line of priests to the Goddess Pele. When she became a Christian she kept all of this knowledge with her, and was not able to pass it on to her children or *Mo'opuna* (grandchildren). Only in recent years are we beginning to appreciate our native Hawaiian culture and to mourn its loss. The renaissance in the *traditional hula* (not the Hollywood version), and the Hawaiian language, the new interest in the building of voyaging canoes, and the renewal in the native arts have rekindled the recovery of some of this knowledge.

Paul Sherry, President of the United Church of Christ, came to Hawai'i to give an apology and commitment to redress to the Hawaiian people on January 17, 1993. It was a momentous occasion as Dr. Sherry and his entou-

rage they spent that day at Iolani Palace, and Paul had the opportunity to speak to the gathered crowds. Later at our Kaunakapili Church (Honolulu), he gave his apology. It was one of the highlights of my life!

The Present

Of all the races in Hawai'i, the Hawaiians continue to have the worst health, are the poorest in comparison to other races, have the lowest per capita ownership of homes, are the people who make up the majority the population in our prisons and jails, and are the most *disadvantaged* of all the races that make up Hawai'i's population. Why has this happened to my people? We are asking difficult questions and not finding too many answers. There is an underlying pain that we are getting in touch with as we come to terms with our history. There is a further pain when our Christian community, of which we are an integral part, is suspicious and lukewarm in supporting us.

The Hawai'i Conference of the UCC has given official support to us Hawaiians and our move towards self determination at the *Aha Pae'aina* (the annual meeting of the Conference). Yet, it has not been easy. I am agonized and pained by the process that we have had to go through to receive this support.

As a Christian *kahu* (pastor) who is a native Hawaiian, I would say that even the church is nervous because of the question of sovereignty. Many Hawaiians, in and out of the church, are still questioning the movement to sovereignty because they see that the Christian faith conflicts with this movement. These folk also see that their loyalty is to the United States, and it would be disconcerting to change this loyalty. Unfortunately, because of the many different views, Hawaiians will be opposing other Hawaiians on the question of sovereignty.

The Future

What is going to happen in Hawai'i? The Native Hawaiian people of Hawai'i will soon have an opportunity to vote in a plebiscite to answer the question of whether we will support the move toward sovereignty. There is no definition yet of what form sovereignty will take. A constitutional convention will have to be convened to work that out. Different sovereignty groups and *ohana* [family] groups have organized, advocating differing views of sovereignty. These views range from reclaiming our

sovereign nation status to accepting nation-within-a-nation status or to keeping things as they are. As Hawaiians we are people taking a fresh look at our history, getting in touch with our emotions, and coming to understand the traumatic history of the 1890s. But there are also people in Hawai'i who are afraid of what we are advocating in regard to sovereignty and its impact on the State of Hawai'i and all its peoples.

All of the events in the recent commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani [ruler of Hawai'i], have brought much pain to the surface for me and for many others, both Hawaiian and those who stand along with us. This occasion has provided for some fresh understanding and education among our people and for all of Hawai'i.

Some have interpreted all the disruption since 1893 as the loss of *pono* [righteousness] in Hawai'i. The solution then is to regain the *pono*. Here the State's motto is helpful. It says, "*Ua mau ke ea o ka aina i ka pono*"—"The life of the land is preserved in righteousness."

I see our move to sovereignty as a move to regain *pono*. Can we not, as persons of faith, celebrate righteousness and give support to the Hawaiian people as we Hawaiians have the opportunity to choose and determine for ourselves our future, the opportunity to stand on our own and to be proud of who we are? We have an opportunity to stand on our own among the peoples of the world.

I don't know where my people will come out on the questions of sovereignty. I see my role as *kahu* to educate and help our people to think hard on these issues and to advocate that we stand proud with other peoples around the world. We are asked to determine our destiny. We seek the support of our sisters and brothers. We will make mistakes, but they will be our mistakes. We will seek advice from others as we envision what gifts the 21st century will bring to Hawai'i and our people. As a person of faith, I see us in a covenantal relationship, asking the faith community to stand along side of us and to let us continue to make decisions for our future, to sovereignty and beyond. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

from Interviews in Hawai'i,
August, 1995

Kekuni Blaisdell

Convenor, Pro-Hawaiian
Sovereignty Group
Coordinator, Ka Pakaukau
Honolulu, Hawai'i

NC: How would you assess the progress of the sovereignty movement at the present time?

KB: It is continuing to gain momentum, and public interest is increasing. On the other hand, resistance by the colonial establishment is tightening, mainly in the form of trying to co-opt and control the movement. Some of our leaders are joining the establishment.

NC: What forms has this effort to co-opt taken?

KB: The establishment, in the form of the state legislature, created the Sovereignty Elections Council, with twenty members appointed by the governor, and with a state mandated process for proceeding. This is a violation of our inherent sovereignty and right to self determination. It calls for a so-called plebiscite, which was supposed to be held in November or December of this year [1995]. If the vote were favorable—if a majority of *kanaka maoli* [native Hawaiians] who voted in the plebiscite favored so-called self-government for the *kanaka maoli*—then the next step was to be the selection of delegates, and the step after that was to be a convention to draft a constitution. All that was decreed by the state, which, of course, has no right to interfere in our sovereignty, our

right to self determination. It is up to us to decide when and how to proceed. That is basic.

NC: Do you want a plebiscite at any time?

KB: We object to the term *plebiscite* because it has certain implications in international law. In international law, a plebiscite on such an issue is binding. In addition, a plebiscite should be conducted by a neutral party—not by the establishment, the oppressor, but by a neutral party—usually under UN auspices. And the establishment, the oppressor, is supposed to withdraw its military. In addition, the process should begin with education, so that the people understand what they are voting for or against, doing and the implications of their choices. So we oppose even the use of the term *plebiscite*. But the Sovereignty Elections Council refuses to consider any other term. Therefore, we consider this vote under the existing circumstances to be merely an opinion poll. Why not call it that? We feel that the Council wants it labeled a plebiscite so that the results can be used against us.

NC: Don't you feel that there should be at some time some kind of opportunity, some means to express the views of the *kanaka maoli*?

KB: Yes, of course. But we want to set it up according to our tradi-

tions. We support those who also propose a *puwala*. A *puwala* is a gathering where people come together and discuss the issues, where they attempt to reach consensus. That is our traditional way. We are aware of how voting is ordinarily done in the U.S., for example, and how the vote can be so readily manipulated. So we say, why don't we go back to our own traditions, our own way of reaching decisions? Why do we have to copy the colonizing oppressor?

NC: Who would be involved? How do you define the *kanaka maoli*?

KB: We define ourselves as *mamo*, descendants of those who founded our nation here, in these islands, in time immemorial. That's the beginning definition. The idea of blood quantum, used by the U.S. Government, is outside of consideration. It is very divisive. We also honor *hanai* (adoption) We may take into our families those who are not of our ancestry, but who choose to live like us, with us, and who embrace, fully embrace, our culture, without reservation. They become one of us. My son is *hanai*; he is of Japanese ancestry and was born in Japan. He is my son, part of me. He's not excluded, he's included.

NC: Those who today call themselves native Hawaiians, *kanaka maoli*, are not what they were when Captain Cook arrived, not

racially or culturally. Is this emphasis on the *kanaka maoli* a romanticization, or is there actually something that marks them as different from the dominant culture?

KB: We are distinct. We are very different from others in some important ways. [He chants the opening lines of Hawaii's oldest chant.] This is *He Kumulipo*, sometimes called the "Creation Chant," but it's much more. Of course, it was banned by the missionaries. The literal meaning of the opening lines refers to the fiery earth, turning against a changing sky, but the *kaona*, the hidden meaning, refers to the mating of *Wakea*, our sky father, with *Papa*, our earth mother. Out of that mating came, and continues to come, everything in our cosmos. Which means that everything in the cosmos is *ohana* [related, family] because we all have the same parents; because our parents are living, everything is living. For example, the sun and the wind and the light and the shadow and the water and the rocks and the clouds, as well as the fish and the birds and *kanaka*—all are living. Not only that, but everything communicates.

We believe that everything has a spiritual dimension, and that these spiritual forces communicate. We need to open our receptors to receive these messages, and open ourselves to speak, to re-

spond to these spiritual forces. These messages provide ways of thinking, feeling, believing, and behaving in order to establish what we call *pono*, which is justice and rightness, proper relationships, balance, and harmony so that things go well. This means that if things don't go well, there's been a loss of *pono*. It requires individual effort to maintain *pono*. It requires individual effort—thinking, feeling, acting. *Pono* isn't something that "just comes." So we cannot be passive; we participate and bear some degree of responsibility for what occurs.

This is the basic belief of the *kanaka maoli*, but most of our people are not fully aware of it. They sense it, but they can't articulate it. They frequently behave that way. We behave intuitively, and for that we are frequently criticized for being too emotional. People say we aren't responsible, we aren't on time, and we don't do things according to a Western time-frame. But that's because we feel intuitively and rely on those feelings.

You see this in our attitude toward the land. We know, intuitively, that everything is sacred, and therefore it is to be respected. So we cannot destroy or pollute it. To do that is to hurt ourselves, because we belong to the *aina* [land, biota], it doesn't belong to us to exploit; we belong to it. It feeds

us. *Aina* means *that which feeds*—it nurtures us, therefore we must nurture it, not just for ourselves, but for all generations in the future. We must always be thinking ahead, to those who come after us.

Not all *kanaka maoli* have this consciousness. I had to grow and feel my way through all of this, and talk to the older people and read and reflect. And then I would say, "Ah, that's what my grandparents meant!"

NC: How is this sense of connectedness taught?

KB: To me it is natural if we let it be. Here in Hawai'i we are in a natural world of planting and fishing and relating to all of these natural forces, and it becomes part of us. But in the modern world we have cut ourselves off from that; we're "high tech." We have removed ourselves from each other, and these machines have become our masters. When we talk to indigenous people elsewhere who are close to the earth and depend on the rain and sun, we learn how they know how to live according to these relationships in the natural world.

And that's why we and our children have to get back to that kind of life, to the *ahupua'a*, which is a place that includes the shore and the land reaching all the way to the top of the inland mountain range. It usually includes at least

one valley. It's not only geographical, but also a social, cultural, and integrated food-producing system, so that the fisherman shares his catch with everyone, the taro farmer shares his crop with everyone in the *ahupua`a* and the *mauka* [highland] woodsman likewise. They all share. No money, no need for money. It is fair exchange, value for value. Therefore, the greatest virtue is not how much money you've got, but rather one's relations, how much one gives, how much one shares with others. The goal is never to consume just to consume, but to take only what one needs, and never to take more. We always ask the great forces, and we always thank them.

NC: Do you think that the recovery of the Hawaiian language, going on now, is an encouraging sign in the recovery of the culture?

KB: Our language is the basis of our culture. It is not merely to provide synonyms for use in the dominant culture. It requires great respect, and our living our culture. Our dance music draws people. Most of the hula *kumu* [teachers] are serious. They feel responsible. In our tradition teachers are the experts who are revered. The teachers' genealogy is important. They transmit our culture through our language, chants, and hula.

NC: People talk about the *ohana*,

the family. What is different about the family in Hawaiian culture?

KB: Our culture is one of group affiliation. We don't exist outside of the group. The group is essential. So you see our difficulties in the Western school system, where the emphasis is on the individual and the student is graded by class standing. That's why our children won't raise their hands in class to answer questions, because that is calling attention to the self. Our approach is "talk story." Talk story isn't just talking, it's sensing and exploring the other. It establishes the values for proceeding to talk. It requires respect for everyone, a level playing field, without regard to hierarchy.

NC: But Hawaiian culture traditionally had rank; it had hierarchy: in the *ali`i* [a hereditary nobility].

KB: The whole concept of *ali`i* is related to *mana*, special power and talent and ability. There are two kinds of *mana*. Some *mana* is inherited, one is born with it, and some is acquired. *Ali`i* have greater *mana* by birth than the rest of us. But on the other hand, they had to prove their worthiness, their *mana*, or they would not gain the support of the people.

NC: Could one become *ali`i* through achievement?

KB: No, but one could become a

kahuna [member of the priestly class]. So *ali`i* does carry the implication that one has inherent *mana*. But also at times, especially in the 19th century, too many of our *ali`i* became so enamored of luxury and material goods, brought by the Westerners, that they lost and gave up their lands, and became no longer responsible to the people. They just gratified their own insatiable wants—they sold out and acquired Western notions. And we have examples of selling out even now. There are some who expect others to respect them just because they are *ali`i*. They have wealth and they flout it.

The *ali`i* system came only recently in the long course of our history, and there was a longer, pre-*ali`i* era in which we thrived. And so although the *ali`i* system became part of our tradition, it is not essential.

NC: People speak of "the restoration of the kingdom." Do you really want to go back to a hereditary kingdom?

KB: Of course not. The whole idea of a monarchy is foreign. It is European. We had chiefs, and we had a long period before that when we didn't have chiefs. The monarchy was established because of the influence of the West.

NC: If there were a gathering, such as you spoke of, to discuss what the *kanaka maoli* should do, what

results would you anticipate? A democracy? A secession? What happens to those who aren't *kanaka maoli*?

KB: One needs to consider where our people are with regard to these key issues, and where we need to move. We already have at least three kings, on paper, as well as a constitutional monarchy. They have named their officials. All claim to be a continuation of the kingly line of the 19th century. They are rivals. Each has some followers. All of them would have an opportunity to present their views at a *puwala*.

We also have at least two constitutional republics. One was created in 1987. That is *Kala hui*, which is headed by Mililani Trask, and claims 26,000 enrolled citizens. Another is the Independent Sovereign Nation State of Hawai'i, which was proclaimed in January of 1994. In 1995 they presented their constitution for ratification, and signed it. And they claim 7,000 citizens. *Kala hui* wants to petition Congress for recognition as a nation-within-a-nation, similar to that of Native Americans. The U.S. has federal policies governing its relations with Native Americans and with the Alaskan native peoples. We *kanaka maoli*

are the only indigenous people not recognized by the U.S. Why is that, why should that be? *Kala hui* is asking for what is already granted to others.

Nation-within-a-nation status once appealed to me. But as I began to learn, I began to see from U.S. actions toward these other native peoples that nation-within-a-nation status was undesirable. That is why our position is—and has been since January of 1989—the eventual goal of total, complete independence. That option should never be foreclosed.

NC: And any person who swore allegiance would be a member?

KB: Yes. There are three main reasons for the movement and, although they are distinct they are also interrelated. Most important is the painful plight of our *kanaka maoli* people. We are at the bottom by every social measure. Healthwise, our situation is getting steadily worse, not better. I have just reviewed the health statistics based on the 1990 census. Life expectancy has shortened in the past ten years. Mortality rates from major causes of death are no better and in some cases worse. *The present system doesn't work for us.* We've got to change the system.

The projection is that by the year 2044, there will be no more *pua* [pure] *kanaka maoli*. So although the *hapa kanaka* [partly native Hawaiians, mixed ancestry] are increasing, the full *kanaka maoli* are declining.

The second reason for change is to correct the historical wrongs and injustices. These aggressions continue today. Those who do not share our view of the land are still destroying it. We *kanaka maoli* still do not have the respect of the dominant society. This is outrageous. We *kanaka maoli* have to begin the work ourselves. We can't expect others to help until we ourselves are clear and strong in our personal identity.

In a very important sense, we are not Hawaiians, part-Hawaiians, or Americans. We are *kanaka maoli*. That term itself is a metaphor, with a distinct meaning. It means that we are true and loyal to our own traditions, and that this land that we respect and everything else is sacred, and we all share in it. The main reason we are at the bottom is that we are fearful and confused. That's what colonization does. The economic system traps us. It makes us dependent, keeps us so busy just making enough to get along that we spend

our leisure time drinking alcohol or caught up in TV, watching violence or committing it ourselves.

The third reason: is to create a better homeland here in Hawai'i, not only for us *kanaka maoli*, but for all others who choose to live in our tradition. That tradition is one of respect for the dignity and diversity of all people, and reverence for the environment as sa-

cred. We must stop exploitation and destruction, consumerism and waste, unmitigated in-migration of the super rich. They are becoming the only ones who can afford to live here. But they are displacing us and destroying our fragile land. They are doing it to us and to indigenous people everywhere. It's global. We can't speak for the whole world, but we

can join with others to protest and to act locally.

So we invite others who share our values and tradition to join us. It is basically a moral argument and a spiritual issue. It is a matter of declaring the truth, standing up and speaking it out. That's why we feel that the churches should be leading and not hampering or passively following the struggle. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

from *Interviews in Hawai'i*,
August, 1995

NC: How would you describe your relationship and that of the *kanaka maoli* to your own world? Is it like the Christian concept of stewardship?

PB: There's a book I like which shows pictures of the animals and the plants and the birds. It gives a genealogical chant of one *ali'i* [noble], and what you find there is not human names, but names of birds and octopi and other living things. There are human names too, but first the names of the lowly. When there are other beings on the same genealogical line as an *ali'i*, that means that you are blood kin, blood to each other, and how I take care of my blood is different from how I take care of something I am the steward of.

We are not stewards of anything; if anything, the *aina* [land, biota] is our steward, and we have forgotten the real relationship, or it got forced out of us. We are not stewards; the *aina* is not here for human beings. We are kin to it, and we must treat the *aina* as kin. Stewardship is a benign term for domination. It may be benign, but it's still domination. How we are all part of this world together is what should infuse all our attitudes and our relationships.

My grandparents lived within the circle of tradition. They didn't worry about culture, *they did it.*

We are very conscious of culture now, but they weren't. But they saw the modern world coming, and they weren't part of it. Progress is associated with modernity—when it's positive, it means education, science, technology, religion, history, civilization. But with tradition we associate stone age tools, black magic, superstition. So what my grandparents told my parents was to move into the modern circle, to learn the language and the ways, that's where you are going to survive. So in one generation my parents lost their ability to speak Japanese and Hawaiian, and lost everybody else in back of them.

Our rulers tried to destroy our language, and made speaking Hawaiian illegal, punishable by law. And it wasn't just Hawaiian, it was Chinese and Japanese too. Everyone who wasn't an American speaker was punished. When the law tells you that speaking your own language is not a good thing to do, what does that tell you about who we are? Unfortunately that mentality still exists. It's been years since that law was off the books, but that information hasn't come to every citizen.

So my parents' generation lived this really schizophrenic life for a long, long time. And then they said, "We live in a modern world, but we need to find a place for the

traditional in there." What was created generally was occasions: May Day, Aloha Week, Kamehameha Week, song contests. These are occasions not for practice but for remembrance. Many cultures have done this, because they've lost their roots. The events were a little bit better, they held on to certain aspects of a culture, but they were not really where we needed to go. Now we're building these projects to use both tradition and modernity. The tradition of Hawai'i is land based. The land created Hawai'i, created biota which are unique to any place else in the world, and created a people and a culture which are also unique.

This *aina* created us. It is alive and we know it. On the big island it is still creating, still birthing new ways of looking at organizing our animals and plants. We have all of these modernities that have come from Asia and the U.S. The question for us is how do they come into this world without destroying the traditional circle?

I tell the story of Isabella Abbott, a world-class scientist, trained at Stamford, who grew up as a native child, learned how to plant taro, live the old way, speak Hawaiian. She's a child of two ways of knowing. We asked her during our taro festival to talk about *malka* and *makai* [the mountains and the ocean], and to talk about the sea-

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weed and the taro, the two parts of our world. She set up a microscope, cut taro, and put it on the slides. Then she told the story about how the Gods made the taro, who is our older brother. Now, an older brother takes care of the younger siblings, which is what we humans are. So she told that old story, and then told the new story, about how nutritious taro is. It's all related.

NC: Does your story apply only to people born on these islands?

PB: Whoever lives here, these are our people. What has become the metaphor for us is weaving. Hawai`i has been thought of as a melting pot, but it's really a *weaving*. A woven mat has strands that are different. Even if they are similar, there are variations. It's like the sovereignty discussion: every strand offers something to the whole. But you can also mix in other materials, as we do in our weaving, and that's what our society is made up of. When we want to, we can unweave, and each strand has its integrity, its own roots, and we can appreciate where it came from and celebrate it. Weaving doesn't make us all homogeneous. We are living multicultural diversity: I'm Japanese, Chinese, Hawaiian, Filipino, and German.

NC: Does this "mat" metaphor work elsewhere?

PB: I've seen it happen. I spent a lot of time in Appalachia, at Highlander Center, where I was the fifth Horton Scholar. They felt that we Hawaiians had the ability to help others learn to weave. I traveled in Tennessee, Kentucky, North and South Carolina. I went into the hollers and met whites with an *aina* consciousness, with a history that was deep and tragic. They had echoes of their old language and ways, and music like ours. We found ways to include people who one would never think had any commonality at all.

NC: I've been told that there are forty to forty-five different sovereignty groups right now, or maybe even more. Is this a strength or a weakness?

PB: This can be a strength, because when you hear different approaches, you begin to understand the issues better. Let me tell you a story. When my second child was little, his grandmother took him to see horses and cows. She told Puha to look at them, and expected some big response. But Puha would just sit in his stroller and show no excitement at all. But the third or fourth time, she got down on her hands and knees to look at what he was seeing, and realized that all he saw was tall grass! So she picked him up to show him what she saw, and then things changed. But that change

could not happen if she had not taken the trouble to see things from his point of view, directly, not just by asking a question, but to get down to where he was.

That is the approach we are asking of ourselves: to deal with history from the missionaries' point of view as well as from the economic developers' point of view, the Castle and Cooks. These represent major economic power and missionary history, and were major causes of action and change in Hawai`i. We need to try to see history from their point of view, because that the only way we can challenge them to see it from ours.

You don't bring change by talking across media, or talking only when you have hot issues. You have to do it in those pockets of peace and calm when you all feel ready to give the best. People have to be committed to change, to changing themselves first and then to helping to change others. If you're just going to kick and moan and scream you put the process at risk, because your opposite is in the process of change too, and you want to keep the listening ears and heart open. Change is not going to happen if you just accuse and berate your opposite and want to fight another battle.

We need to be able to say, "This is our mutual history, this is how I

played a part in it, how you played a part, and now what are we collectively going to do?" But the approach is to be willing to listen. If I am, they cannot refuse to accept my gift in good faith. But the issue is reciprocity. We have to listen to each others' stories. Some one of us has to open the door and say, "Come in here, we want you. We are part of you and you are part of us."

We've had to help the corporate community see that our protests weren't about stealing other people's money. They believed that we wanted to slap people around because of the history, and because we have to admit that this land is owned primarily by people not indigenous to it, and because development has done more harm than good in our communities. So they thought we might be vindictive.

So we had to say that *aloha* is expressed with your arms out as if to embrace, but it is also expressed with your arms held tight to your body, as if you were holding your children or other things that are precious close to you. *Aloha* is both: it is giving and it is holding on and protecting. People from outside have thought that it was just giving and giving, and we native Hawaiians have fallen into that too. So we need to remember that the balance of *aloha* is to protect and hold. The full meaning of *aloha* is an act of preservation,

not just for us, but for the future.

For too long we have been talking to ourselves, to people in that community who already agreed with us, but we never had access to the ear of real decision makers. The only way we'd had to talk to them was through the media, and that doesn't translate the things of the heart.

Hawaiians have this saying, *He alo*, which means *face to face*. And that's really how we learn about each other; there's no other way. Many foundations in Hawai'i which have money to help the people are built on missionary and sugar and pineapple money, and there's a tremendous amount of guilt associated with it. So they all use intermediaries and staff like Hawaiian Community Foundation, because they don't want to deal with us directly. But I began to meet with them face to face two and a half years ago, and we now talk on a much deeper level.

I bring students from the university to meet with business and community leaders. The students have been taught to be "objective," but I tell them that the only way we can avoid putting our value systems on others is to know what we ourselves value, to examine who we are, and then to meet with people. When we see clearly that there's a chasm, we have to

build a bridge. But everything starts with knowing yourself and the history of Hawai'i and your part in it. You have to acknowledge that you have an obligation to the process if you are here.

In a real sense, community development is spiritual development, and the only way to do it is to treat it as sacred work, as spiritual work. This work we've been doing here, in this aquaculture effort, has been the most God-filled time I've ever experienced especially the past several weeks; in a lot of this work you feel God's hand. We're working on a strategy, which is a self-sufficiency at the grassroots level, an economic development project to help people earn extra money while still holding a full-time job. In the process, they'll learn something about entrepreneurship.

NC: How does the project work?

PB: All the pieces have fallen into place. Now there is a project where some Federal money unlocked a much larger amount of money, which goes for planning and developing family pieces of the project, to help us diagnose what the families involved may need, whether it's spiritual help, financial planning, temper management, drug problems, whatever. Some of the money will go to leverage the building and physical

planning of an aquaculture park on Hawaiian homelands. We are negotiating for a thirty acre parcel at the mouth of our community, a place that needs that kind of uplifting.

We've worked, initially, with the strongest families, those that have the greatest chance of moving off the welfare system and staying off. They can be mentors to the next level. Each must be a two-parent family with small children and one parent working. Just across the street from us we have fifty families. We are going to find those who have high motivation to have a place to own. There must be high motivation all the way around.

The families in our basic project have built small, backyard projects, which will make more of their income come into the community. This project feeds people, so it's not like charity jobs, which are okay jobs, but those are *jobs*. We are creating *work*, and work is someplace you put your sacredness into.

Most of the families in our project are home owners, half of them living in Hawaiian housing on the Hawaiian Homelands. But many of them are renters; we have a variety of situations. We don't have any families on welfare yet, but we have had families who

have been on welfare but who want to work. We didn't want to work with families with high stress levels, and be teaching them stuff that would cause more stress. We wanted to work with families that had some fat, both in their budget and their lives, to take on new learning skills. We wanted to see what it takes to transfer information to families.

That's what we've been doing this year, and now we really know what we're doing, and we're really sure about the technology because it's a no-fail technology. We're raising the golden talapia fish. We have twenty-eight Hawaiian families, with over two-hundred members.

We don't work with single-parent families because we find that education can be a real wedge in the family. When the woman is getting educated, and thinking about new things, dreaming about new things, and the family hasn't been equally empowered, she's a changed person, and she may not be the appropriate change agent for that family. There've been major breakups in families when something that starts out so positive for one person cannot be carried through to the whole organism of the family. Families have to know from the initial meetings why they're all in it together. How that family does its business is up

to them. To us, a family is whoever lives under the roof, not blood kinship, but relational.

But the family can't work by itself. It has to work with other families in the neighborhood. If there's an emergency, someone has to take care of your fish. We wanted to overcome the sense that the community is changing and being swept out from under your feet. So we've got to build community. Just living next to each other and hoping that God will work magic and you'll become neighbors doesn't work. People stay inside their own fences, even in the Hawaiian Homelands. So we needed to use a strategy that people wanted enough that they would overcome their habits and their fears. Economic development helps people work with their neighbors.

And they must agree that what they raise is not just for their table and their neighbors', but it's for the whole life of this community. This is our nest; if we don't take care of this nest, this breast, then we're all going to die. Recognizing that the community and repair of the nest have to be the main focus helps make a real neighborhood, which includes all the people.

This project creates healthy food which people can sell at a price they're not going to get downtown. Downtown we can get \$1 or

\$1.50 more, but we've got to produce it at a price that people can afford. We also grow taro and teach people how to grow it, so we have the fish-and-poi strategy, almost a complete diet.

On the application form we ask the family what their values are—what are their goals, what do they want to achieve for their family, and what they are willing to do to achieve those goals. If there is no marriage between their values and ours, then they have to find someplace else. We tell them the Hawaiian concept that work is medicine. We're not looking just to provide job skills: we want *sacred* work, where the family can come together and work together around sacred things. Feeding people is sacred, and it is our responsibility, our blessing, and our burden to do this. They must understand fully.

NC: Do the children work too?

PB: Yes, the children are major participants; often they take care

of the tank. A lot of times when we take a water supply out to homes, the women are the ones who explain what's involved. I've taken tours from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and from the Department of business and economic development—all men, of course—out to these places, and they see the fish and these women and their babies, and they come away from that experience amazed about what's happening. And it's coming together in the family—the men, women, and children, they all have roles.

The thing that's incredible is that it's being done through Western technology. The tanks are created by a Pennsylvania firm on Western scientific principles. We've taken that technology and put it into our value system and made it totally ours. And what you see is a mixture of ways of knowing so that our kids don't have to choose—"I'm modern, I can only do this," or "I'm traditional, I can

only use this." But that's not the way Hawaiian people are. We are very pragmatic people. These tools are there for us to use, but we use them to celebrate our values, not to enslave them. So all this stuff is coming together around this small, scientific, economic development project.

We paid a lot of attention to the naming of the project. Hawaiians have a deep, remembered, practiced culture around naming. Ours is the Waianae Coast Community Alternative Development Corporation. The word *alternative* means choices, other ways of doing things, but for us it has also meant that it can *alter* natives. That's what happened. Those who came to us didn't kill us, but they *altered* us, made us different so that we fit in their world, and made us forget our own world. In this project, we are altering people again, bringing them back to what they were, but still enabling them to live in an altered world. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

from Interviews in Hawai'i,
August, 1995

Tyrone
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NC: In a place of so many mixed races and ethnic groups, how would you define the Native Hawaiians, or the *kanaka maoli* as people now call them?

TR: People play on the fact that they can say, "I was born and raised in Hawai'i, and therefore I'm Hawaiian." The U.S. Congress has defined *na kanaka maoli* [Native Hawaiians, pl.] in terms of blood quantum—50% or more aboriginal blood makes you a Hawaiian. Or you can say that *ke kanaka maoli*, (the singular) is anyone who can trace his or her ancestry to someone who was living here at the time of Cook's arrival.

There are many who want to be Hawaiian, and they'll say, "I was born and raised there." In one way they are right; if I had been born in California, I would be a Californian. But if I had been born in Navaho country, I could not say I was Navaho. So it's a very interesting process, and people use it to the disadvantage of *na kanaka maoli*. They are the people who have the blood of the aboriginal settlers who were here before Western intervention into the history of Hawaii in 1778.

NC: So to you blood quantum is not important.

TR: It's a divisive tool put on us by the Congress of the U.S. If you have the blood of the people of

the land, you are a native of that land. I've talk with the African American community, and they say if you have one sixty-fourth African American blood, you are an African American. I sit on the intertribal council of Hawai'i, as chair of the Ethics and Problem Solving Committee. They define an Indian as one documented by federal or tribal registry. I go with their definition, because they are the people of the blood. At General Synod in St. Louis, two years ago, I heard teenagers of African American descent who were talking about who they were. One said, "American," one said "Black," another said, "African American." They used all these terms, and all were discussing what they really were. One said "American, period." That discussion has to be defined by indigenous people, by native people, and they need to find their own answers.

NC: It's ironic that the $\frac{1}{64}$ lineage was created originally to keep African Americans down. Because we are increasingly a country of mixed races, many people of color are now objecting to the limited definitions available to them. At the moment, we may be stuck with definitions that are no longer *objectively* valid, even though these definitions count for a great deal *politically*.

TR: If someone who is not of *kanaka maoli* ancestry defines

himself as *kanaka maoli*, this would enable them as beneficiaries to tap into estates that *na ali'i* [the nobles] left to their people. For us the issue becomes more interesting because a lot of non-native people became citizens of the Kingdom of Hawaii during the nineteenth century, while others chose to have dual citizenship. When the Queen was overthrown by American marines, with the support of the U.S. Consulate, they all lost their citizenship. So this thing of Hawaiian citizenship doesn't affect just those of us who are of the blood.

But the thing I am very aware of is that this discussion will lead to sovereignty. The *kanaka maoli* have never been given an opportunity to choose for themselves what they want to be.

I talked to some politicians who voted for statehood in 1959, and they said that they had not understood the full implications of their vote. America had been told to release these colonized states, and what it did instead was to offer statehood to Alaska and Hawai'i. The legislators did not realize fully what was involved. They thought it was more important to have taxation and representation, and did not look at how their vote would bind them under international law.

NC: What will sovereignty mean if

people vote for it? Are there people who hesitate because they don't fully understand what it will look like?

TR: I think it's a racist position for people to support sovereignty or self determination by *na kanaka maoli* only if they can know exactly what it will be. They're not allowing the people who need to make this determination for themselves to do so. In essence they're saying, "If I like your definition, I will support you."

For me, the whole concept of sovereignty is self determination. We need to make the choice that our grandparents were denied over a hundred years ago. Our people have said to me, "Define sovereignty," and I have said, "It is the inherent right of a people to make a choice for themselves as to the direction of their nation." Immediately I get into trouble because people ask, "What is *political* sovereignty, what is *economic* sovereignty, and so forth. Define them." So my answer has started to become, "Will you define God for me? What is he, what is she, what is the God of Noah as against the God of Abraham, the God of Judges, of Kings, of the Psalmist, of the Preacher, of Jesus, Paul, or Revelation? And if the church can come to one clear, central definition of God, then I will understand God." But I don't think the

church can ever do this; yet still we all believe in God.

I'm bothered by people who ask, "Why don't the Hawaiian people get together around one definition and accept that?" The U.S. Congress has never gotten together on most issues and agreed to do one thing together, yet that's okay. It's interesting that a power structure should ask that of us. It's always interesting when a people who are empowering themselves are told, "You have to do it this way." That isn't empowerment.

The sovereignty issue covers a wide spectrum. Some, when they say *sovereignty*, think of a nation-within-a-nation, like the American Indians have. The problem with that is that the U.S. broke all of its treaties with the Native Americans, as it has done with the Kingdom of Hawai'i. There are others who believe that the sovereign nation of Hawai'i exists right now, based on the Constitution of 1843, under Queen Kalama. That Constitution, I am told, is the only one in the world that has God as its sole authority! But there is also the constitution of King Kamehameha VI, who says that he's the heir of the Kamehameha dynasty and has established his own kingdom.

Then there are those who want to be part of the U.S. system but at the same time still be part of the sov-

ereign nation of Hawai'i. And finally there are those pro-sovereignty groups that want everything American—in personality, business, and culture—to leave Hawai'i. So you have this wide diversity, with all kinds of offshoots and little groups in between. By some accounts there are two hundred Hawaiian sovereignty groups.

But the thing is that the *kanaka maoli* need to be given that choice, *that chance to choose*. The most horrendous choice I could see would be if they put together a coalition which embodies that wide diversity. That would really call for some hard work. But if they can choose what they want, there may be enough who will say, "We choose to remain citizens of state of Hawai'i and of the USA," or there may be those who say, "We want an independent nation."

When as a minister I make the declaration of marriage. I do it by saying, "By the authority vested in me by the state of Hawai'i, by the United Church of Christ, and by the free association of free, native Hawaiian people, I pronounce that you are..." I've been doing this, but there's one hotel that refuses to have me come in and do weddings; they say it's political! But I say that once you mention the state of Hawai'i, it's political. Still, they want me, as a *kanaka maoli* minister, to come in and do

weddings! So I've stopped doing weddings for that particular hotel. It's been interesting for me; I tell the couple what I want to do, and I haven't had one say, "Don't do it." Others thank me.

NC: You seem to be willing to go with the majority, wherever it leads.

TR: People say, "What about self determination?" and I say, "Look, God is big enough to deal with this. After all, the nation of Israel said to their judges and their patriarchs, 'Give us a king,' and God, in God's wisdom, allowed God's people to move in that direction." But we, as *na kanaka maoli*, have battled this now for years to get to the opportunity to make a choice.

NC: Do you see signs that the movement is gaining momentum and support, both in church and elsewhere? And if so, what are those signs?

TR: A friend told me that the movement has come a long way, but there's still a long way to go. The goal is not accomplished. But many now know about it. My own mother said recently, "We in the church have not treated Hawaiian folk fairly. We need to deal with that, we need to apologize." She is pure Chinese, and I didn't know she felt that way.

NC: Does this "rainbow mixture"

of people and races and cultures here in Hawai'i complicate the issue of who the *kanaka maoli* are?

TR: For me it doesn't, because it's a personal choice. I grew up spending my weekends with my Chinese grandmother. My dad taught us Hawaiian culture and values by living them. I thought everybody lived like us, but later learned they didn't. As I got older, I began to identify what was uniquely Hawaiian. Even my Chinese grandmother had incorporated Hawaiian words into her Chinese. That's part of the process. The richness of our ancestral mix brings strength into the Hawaiian nation and community. I don't deny the German or the Chinese in me.

NC: But doesn't this mixing make *na kanaka maoli* a fiction, a romanticization?

TR: Some believe that. Some believe we should marry only our own kind. But of course that doesn't always work. The children produced from these relationships need to be provided with an opportunity to see their full heritage. I feel at home in the Chinese community, but more at home with *na kanaka maoli*. I've also found that a lot of Chinese values are close to Hawaiian values, and this has forced me to look at universal values, and how culture presents them.

NC: But the Native Hawaiians of

today aren't the Native Hawaiians of the time of the contact—neither racially nor culturally. What does native Hawaiian culture give to this political entity that would be both distinctive and better than the present?

TR: Native folk tell stories. When they ask who I am, I say, "First and foremost, I am a spiritual person." I really believe that one of the things *na kanaka maoli* bring to the world is the deep foundation and belief in the spiritual source and spirituality of the whole universe. We operate out of that. For me to move from the European American understanding of the sacred and the secular to an understand of the Oneness of everything was one of the most freeing experiences of my life. I do not see history as linear, where God intervenes through Jesus at one point, but I see it as Matthew Fox does, with history being cyclic. Things happen again and again, like the seasons, and life continues on. This is based in my personal experience. At no point is God absent unless we choose to ignore God's presence in us. I think that's the contribution. It's not unique from *na kanaka maoli*, many people feel this way, but we need to keep it in the forefront.

NC: Do you really think that all Hawaiians have this sense of being spiritual, this sense of the holi-

ness of the *aina* [land], after all that's been done both to them and to their land?

TR: That's a high risk question. No, all aren't. Some are very determined to bring the Euro-American dominant society to its knees because of the deep hurt and anger they have felt. Some play at the spiritual game. These are typically human reactions; they are common everywhere.

I'm really clear that I don't want to be the one to judge. I've started to say, "This bothers me because . . .", because I'm aware that our source in the *kanaka maoli* community has been our own families. Yet I know that families on two different islands may interpret the same event differently.

NC: I've always wondered: is *haole*, the word for whites, a racist term? It means *without life*, doesn't it?

TR: It doesn't mean *without life*, it means *without color*. It was first directed toward Euro-American sailors, at their pallor. But every group has its own way of defining itself and others, and the *kanaka maoli* are people; every aspect of the human personality—good and bad—is present in us too.

NC: I don't want to romanticize native Hawaiians in this report. Still, there's a great danger of presenting a sort of twentieth-cen-

tury version of the myth of the noble savage.

TR: Hawai'i already has a mystical aura about it—Hollywood Hawai'i, with tinsel hula skirts. It's amazing to find people who come through here and don't enjoy the ancient hula because it's "not Hawaiian."

NC: What about people who've lived here for years but aren't Native Hawaiian? Where do they fit in this?

TR: I think, first and foremost, that *na kanaka maoli* need to make the choice, together with the descendants of those who were citizens of the kingdom. But *na kanaka maoli* are more entitled, because the land, the sea, and the sky are really an extension of our family and an extension of our relationship with the Supreme Source. Some of us choose to call that God. It's our land, and I live because of what the land and the sky and the sea provide for me. It provides me comfort and security, and allows the breath of God in me to exist and grow.

Once our kingdom has been re-established, in whatever form, I don't believe that it would ever say, "You need to be of the blood to be of the kingdom." It would be open to anyone who would like to be part of the kingdom.

I suspect, and this is my personal suspicion, that sometimes the bureaucratic system is afraid. Because if a kingdom is established, like an Indian nation, and it sets its own taxation rate, and that rate happens to be lower than that set by the state and federal governments now, people could transfer their land and their business registration and their loyalty to the kingdom, and pay a lower tax rate than is paid by an American citizen. This would begin to attack the coffers of the federal, state, and county governments, and people are leery about this.

NC: They're worried about other things too, aren't they?

TR: Yes, they're leery that if the kingdom is established, people are going to lose their homes and land, which they bought. But if that happens, many *kanaka maoli* would lose their homes too, because some of the land was bought and sold unfairly. If all of the lands were given back, those charged with doing so would have to deal with everybody fairly. Some of the lands had false premises and documents. It is my suspicion that some documents may have been reinterpreted to include non-Hawaiians on lands supposedly held only for *na kanaka maoli*. Some of the Department of Hawaiian Homelands have been offered for rental and

use to non-Hawaiians, and some have become private lands, even though this land was set aside for *na kanaka maoli*. I think those lands would be reclaimed.

But if landowners went through the process of a title search and had clear title, it would be their land. Most of the lands that we who want a sovereign nation are looking at are those trust lands and ceded lands. Some of us are questioning lands given by the ruling class to the church—sometimes with reversionary clauses but in others given outright as long as the church exists. All of this needs to be worked out and explored.

When President Clinton apologized on 23 November, 1993, he admitted that the U.S. was wrong, and that it had a trust relationship with the ceded and trust lands here in Hawai'i. But he didn't say that the U.S. has a relationship with the *kanaka maoli*. So even in the USA we are not considered a native people. But aside from the American Indians, we are the *only* other *host people*. This raises a lot of questions for us: we are acceptable, and yet we're not. And for us, who see the land as part of our family, a familial extension, you can't make that separation. It's like saying, "I trust your mother, but not your father."

NC: You keep referring to the

kingdom. Do you really want a return to a monarchy?

TR: I use the two terms, *kingdom* and *sovereign nation*, interchangeably. To me kingdom means a sovereign nation, whatever form we choose it to be. And if *na kanaka maoli* choose to remain citizens of the state of Hawai'i, I will acknowledge it as the people's choice. I will also acknowledge if they choose to go to the other extreme and say that whatever or whoever isn't Hawaiian has to get out. The people need to choose, and we need to do that as a nation.

What I'm looking for is a nation of people who have determined *for themselves* their future and that of their children's children.

NC: Everybody I've talked to in Hawai'i speaks of the *aina*, the biota, of father sky and of mother earth. I've started to see this view of the land as the theological basis for the sovereignty movement. Would you agree?

TR: I'm not sure what you're asking. The sovereignty movement has to have a very spiritual base, in which the understanding of the presence of our Spiritual Source in all aspects of our lives is there. This also means that those who oppose us need also to see the presence of God in their lives.

NC: There are issues involved here

that the larger church doesn't understand; perhaps even the church here in Hawai'i doesn't understand them.

TR: It's amazing to me how short the UCC has fallen in educating its constituents about the situation here in Hawai'i, even with regard to who is a native Hawaiian. If it were an African American issue, we would be farther along than we are today. Maybe what we need is to do more confrontation in the area of appropriate education.

Many of us who are *kanaka maoli* grew up hearing only the missionary story. When we found out there was another part of the story, we were denied the opportunity to learn about it. I know of adults in their forties and fifties who left the church because there was only one story. And it pains me to know that they have had to leave this fellowship because we have chosen to deny our cultural identity. It is also painful to realize that as you stand for the right in this, people target you. Yet often, when I've confronted them and asked, "Have you ever heard me speak on these issues?" they never have. When they do hear me, they often say, "Oh, you and I are on the same track," and I say, "I've been telling you this for five years."

I am saddened by a church that has called me into fellowship and

has taught me social justice, to love people, to work and treat others as members of a family, and then, when it comes to our own issues, sometimes hesitates. Most of us who are now between the ages of forty and sixty were weaned on the civil rights movement and the war in Vietnam, which were confrontative. We have had to learn our history and those methods, although confrontative methods may polarize positions. We sure try hard at negotiating, but there doesn't seem to be much going on.

NC: Do you see progress in raising the issue in the church?

TR: I see progress, but some of my dreams have fallen short. I also need to remind myself that I won't always harvest what I sow, but I would like to see some of these things come to be. It's a little better for my children. But I look around and see all of our folk who have fallen, wounded and hurt, and I realize how important this effort has been. Still, my own children won't know the whole history, because it's not part of their world view.

NC: Some churches in Hawai'i have responded very negatively to the actions of the President of the church, and to heads of the World and Homeland Boards, who have created a Foundation to

help *na kanaka maoli*. How do you react to that?

TR: We had some negative reaction to the apology even by native Hawaiian churches. I sat with some of the older leaders, who are almost my parent generation, after it was all over. We had a chance to talk together, and I apologized that we didn't spend enough time telling them what we were going to do. Some of us just barged ahead and forgot to tell them. And one woman said, "But now that we have a chance to set things right, your statements are going way beyond my wildest dreams of what could be." Part of the process has been to recognize that people feel threatened that their faith could not understand why people would seek their cultural identity, and they don't see how this search can be part of being a church. They to realize that cultural identity is not just food preparation or entertainment. People were afraid, and that's understandable. When the power base shifts, you have to share the power with the people, and that's scary.

NC: How do you include Native Hawaiian identity in Christianity. What would it mean for day-to-day activities and church practice?

TR: The church has been my shelter for twenty years. I work with small-membership *kanaka*

maoli churches, though I earn my keep elsewhere. In our church we wrestle with the idea that we are all an extension of our Spiritual Source's breath, and we choose to call that spiritual source God. It's a God who has created in all of us his/her breath. We're very clear about God being *God*, not just being some masculine spirit.

That breath in us calls us to be an extension of God in our society; it calls for us to work so that the harmony of the kingdom of the universe of God is realized. We have stopped placing the emphasis on how sinful we are, and rather place it on the potential God has provided in us. We went back to the Genesis story, where God saw "that it was good," for we believe that if we look at the goodness in all people, the world will be good. We have spent too long looking at the sinfulness of people, and have become contaminated by that sinfulness. Psychologists tell us that if you tell a child that he/she is good and has potential, the child will grow that way, but if you tell the child he or she is sinful, they believe that.

So we've started to look at that breath of God in us, and we begin to take seriously that God is in us, and that we are with God all the time. What that means is that the ritual of prayer is done for the community. God becomes a per-

sonal part of our daily life. Some of us never even talk about God, just as we don't talk about any other things which are part of our daily lives and which we do without making any special note of them. That's how it is with God.

When the UCC came out with the integrity of creation concept, we looked at it and said, "What's this about? This is and has always been part of our lives." Like Native Americans, to us the earth is mother and grandmother, the sky is father and grandfather, and that way we are intimately connected with all of God's creation.

This year in our community-based church we've been telling stories, revisiting biblical stories. It's really been fun. The church asked me for ten minute sermons followed by group discussion. (I haven't quite made the ten minute

limit yet.) We've looked at the Noah story, and at Noah being told to take one pair of all animals, and then later on told to take seven pairs of clean and one pair of unclean, and at how the story doesn't jibe. Which was it: one pair of all or seven pairs and one? And that has made us look at how we have set up standards and criteria of judgment that reflect us rather than reflecting what God is. We need to see what has been human based and what is truly God-based. This approach raises all kinds of issues about the hierarchy of leadership, about forms of worship, and they've been fun to explore.

I view Sunday morning worship as a community of people gathering together to share and to express joy and admiration and respect for each other and for their Source.

NC: If you had but one thing to say

to our readers, what would it be?

TR: I guess it would be really to try to understand the words: "What does God require of you, but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God?" If you are aware of that God in you, of God's breath in you, you can't do anything else. *Pono*—justice—isn't a matter of choice. It is "Thy will be done." We have no choice when we work for *pono*. It doesn't end, it *has* to be done.

Then I would say, "Come talk with us, invite us to spend time together, so that we can know and understand and hear each other." There are a lot of fears out there, and fear can ruin people and nations. We're open to talking, to conversation. Let's meet as partners in God's universe.

NC: Thank you, Tyrone. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

from Interviews in Hawai'i,
August, 1995

NC: How do you see the sovereignty movement here on Maui?

KA: Here on Maui we have a magazine that seeks to preserve the Hawaiian cultural tradition, and there are different sovereignty groups as well. We aren't yet sure what sovereignty would look like structurally. But in a sense, we aren't *asking* for sovereignty. We *are* sovereign, we always were. It's for us to determine who we are and what we will do. That's already happening. It's not enough, but it's happening.

I did a sovereignty workshop at my church. But all day long people said, "We just want the land, the homestead lands. But they tell us we can't build on the land because there's no infrastructure, in place, and no money to build one." But the homesteads have generated money for years—where did it go? This issue of the land is a very important issue, and people need to understand it.

NC: Are you hopeful of the eventual outcome?

KA: Oh yes. In churches there's a need to grab on to the notion of *kairos*. The reason sovereignty will come is that it has to come. When you look at history—who would have thought that South Africa would be free, or that the Berlin Wall would fall, etc? Our understanding of justice and righteous-

ness is that this is *pono*, and it must happen.

Is this an unrealistic hope? Basically, being a Christian and a Native Hawaiian at the same time is being in the belly of the beast. The church as an institution can be bad, can make mistakes, but God is present in the world, and change will come. The best in the church can change too.

NC: What about newcomers? What would be their fate after independence or sovereignty?

KA: There are conversations about these issues. There are 1.2 million acres of ceded lands. If they generate income, we—native Hawaiians—want to govern the resources of those lands and of the 200,000 acres not awarded. There are people here who own property privately. It doesn't have to go back. But the ceded lands, lands held by large land owners and sugar and pineapple—that needs to be looked at. We need to be honest about how they acquired those lands. Our church is one that bought land—we bought this beautiful land for \$80, and the congregation won't give it back.

The Native Hawai'i Legal Corporation is examining those issues. It will take a lot of work, but if there are any changes, there must be a legal and moral basis for what is done.

NC: Where do you see the differences between the Native Hawaiian approach to life and the Western approach?

KA: Well, of course, you see the difference in the two approaches to the land. But also, the West's linear approach to history is a point of contrast. Here we have had an oral tradition, but unfortunately, much of it has been lost. The written accounts that we have of Hawaiian history were written with a Western, Christian bias. If you ask Hawaiians about the *aina* [land] today, you'll find that a lot of the sense of the love for the land has been lost. We're trying to figure out what it is again. Many say that Hawaiian's romanticize the land. But it's part of who we are. Our situation now is to rediscover and reclaim. If the land has the spirit of *aloha*, and the land has been taken away, then the *aloha* spirit is lost for the people. We've been separated from the earth—we can't feel it because our shoes are between us and the soil. But if there's *aloha* or life in Hawai'i, it's in the land. We are involved in the life of the land in a spiritual sense.

NC: What signs of progress do you see in the sovereignty movement, and do you see any possible resistance? And is sovereignty even the right word? Maybe it's a self awareness movement.

Kealahou Alike

Pastor,
Keawala`i Congregational Church,
Makena, Maui, Hawai`i

KA: I don't know if the movement is really organized. For example, the magazine here on Maui has a sense that people feel that they want to hold on to the tradition and culture that's Hawaiian. At this church there's that kind of sense as well. And when you look at different areas, you'll see that, almost independent of each other, it's happening. Why, I don't know, I'm not sure. But whether it's language, music, art, dance, the church, community, health, education, whatever, something is happening in each area, although it's not organized. Maybe the Hawaiian agencies and organizations here on Maui are one example, where there've been occasions where people are working together. But if you're looking for something that gives cohesion, I think we're back to talking about *kairos* and spirit.

High visibility press events are one approach. But there are other ways too. Here in my church we've had a canoe club, and on some Sundays, in place of Sunday School the kids go down to the beach and I teach them how to paddle. I've talked about that for two years, and some of our members don't get why we're doing it, but when it's done they say, "What a wonderful ideal!" But unless we teach the kids, in very practical ways close to home, about what Hawai-

ian life was like, you can talk until you're blue in the face about the different approaches to sovereignty—Kahalui or nation-within-a-nation or whatever. Unless the groundwork is being laid where we are, in the little niches and places where we are, the movement cannot survive. It cannot survive on media attention alone.

Also, the kids now have the language immersion program, which developed several years ago. In the long run, that's going to be important to us. And if you look at the major Hula events in Hawai`i, that too is an important way to preserve the culture. When I came back to Hawai`i five years ago, I thought that interest had plateaued and people would lose interest, but they haven't; the excitement has increased steadily.

NC: There's a "Hollywood Hawai`i"—is what is done in these competitions real hula or is it for the tourists?

KA: It's so real that Hawaiians who watch it tell me they're bored! I love the hula, partly because of studying it. It's not as easy as it looks. There's a lot of creativity.

NC: In the nineteenth century, at the time of the overthrow, the church publication called *The Friend* carried articles by a churchman who was simply livid about

the hula. His attitude betrays a lot of the nineteenth-century Christian hang-ups. As Christians who have stayed in the church, where are the points of contradiction between what you're trying to do and Christianity?

KA: When I think about the work that Kekapa [Lee, also a Maui pastor] is doing, the leadership positions in the church to which we've been called, I know that we have to live with our people. There are tensions, there is the push and the pull of change. It cannot happen from just talk, although there must be discussions with the deacons. People get angry and upset, feelings get hurt, but from that process comes change. In our church, for example, you can dance at the altar only if you do a sitting hula. You can't stand up and dance. Yet the hula is not about sexuality, it's about energy and life and the power that comes from the movement of the body. Still, we can do only certain dances.

Yet we can blow a conch shell. In the early years, you see, the Christian churches had no bells, so they blew the conch shell and two miles away people heard it and knew that it was time for church! So when we blow the shell we're not calling up old ancestors; this is what our *kupunā* [elders, ancestors] did as part of Christian worship.

For me the tension is that there's a lot we don't know about what went on before because that was all cut off and eliminated. But when we go back, my concern as a Christian would be how to respect the Hawaiians who choose to say that they are going back to the ancient ways. For example, in October, when the *Makamiki* comes [the season for one of the primary male deities of the ancient Hawaiian pantheon], I always think about the *Makamiki*. It's not so much about the *lono* [ancient Gods] as that in this season the rains come, and things change. I find myself relying on the psalms and other texts which talk about the rain and the changing of the seasons, and things that come and go. I usually try to say it both in terms of acknowledging our cultural past—I don't worship the *lono*—and of drawing it into the context of being a Christian today.

What I mean about respecting other people is that, if I went to Kaho'olawe [the island returned to the Hawaiian people by the U.S. government, which had used it as a firing range; the island is now being turned into a cultural center] during the *Makahiki*, then I would go as a cultural observer, and try to learn and understand. They do celebrations of the *lono* during that season, and if at some

point if I felt comfortable in terms of participating, I would do so. But right now I don't feel comfortable because I don't understand it.

When I lived in San Francisco, I was in one of those Earth Day things, and it was really kind of embarrassing, because the planners incorporated Native American and indigenous peoples' rites and rituals into a kind of New Age thing, and it didn't really mean anything. I was offended. When we talk about what's Hawaiian and what's considered ancient ritual, I would talk to people and say, "What do you think; do you think it's okay for us as Christians to do it?" If we come to some understanding about what that is, we can incorporate it and have a Christian understanding of why we do it. But we shouldn't incorporate something that may offend someone else. If I were taking a statue of Buddha or something and incorporating it, without understanding that tradition, it wouldn't work. Things Hawaiian go back to a period of time that I'm not familiar with, and I would want to talk to the folks that know.

NC: I've worked in Christian-Jewish dialogue, and am intrigued by all the new scholarship. I think there'd be a lot less fuss if people knew more about their own religious his-

tory. It could enrich our religions greatly; but people are afraid.

KA: This business about being afraid—to many Hawaiians, *alma kua* [patron animals] are manifestations of ancestors. If it your *alma kua* is a shark, it's not all the sharks, it's a particular shark. So if your *alma kua* is a shark, you can say which one. That's how specific it is. And of course, you would pay attention to your *alma kua*. But I was with someone who kept asking about *alma kua*. She didn't realize that when people ask these questions they're asking our elders about something that basically was cut off from them. Many of the elders already have a bias that it's not a good thing, because that's what they were taught by the missionaries. But now they're opening up, and saying, maybe it's not such a bad thing, maybe we should find out more.

NC: As you seek to recover your history, do you look for a return to monarchy? To hereditary *ali'i* [nobles]?

KA: There's a language problem—we have to use words like king or queen, or *ali'i*. I know that anti-monarchical feelings are very real among Americans, but we need to go beyond the language to the sense of a stratified system. We need to see

it not vertically, but on a flat surface, with each group having a role and function. The *ali`i* had a responsibility in a world with a limited ecosystem. Still, I'm "past" all that stuff about kings and so on—I want to respect the legacy, but be aware that we're all in it together whatever group you were born into.

One way to look at our history is to imagine that a *haole* [white] man has come to the front door, and has told us that it is wonderful that the Messiah has come to us, since we are pagan practitioners of infanticide. Now we can go to heaven and have Jesus. Since Jesus, no sacrifice is needed any longer.

But we need to say now that you

don't have to come to us like wise men from the East and tell us what to think. Let us wrestle with our own history and make the faith our own, Christian and Hawaiian. We can figure it out for ourselves. If you must come, come open to do some learning yourselves; don't come as parents who think they're dealing with children. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

from Interviews in Hawai'i,
August, 1995

NC: Tell us about yourself.

Andrew: I was born on Lanai, but raised on Maui. I graduated in 1942, and worked in a pineapple cannery. In the summer I was recommended for a Federal job, in the Corps of Engineers, and worked there from 1943–56, working both on Maui and on Oahu. Then I moved to data processing for the Adjutant General's office. I sent statistical reports to Washington, highly classified reports. In 1962 I went to Los Angeles to get into private industry, and stayed there until 1981. I wanted to be in Los Angeles because I was always interested in the entertainment world. I am a full blooded Native Hawaiian.

NC: Do you see a renaissance of Hawaiian culture, as some people have called it, and how does this relate to the issue of sovereignty?

Andrew: Yes. Young people are trying to recapture what was once Hawai'i, especially in the arts. For older people, we are leaving sovereignty up to the young. It is up to them to forge forward. We were satisfied with the *status quo*.

NC: What does Sovereignty mean to you?

Andrew: It means trying to restore what existed with Queen Lili'oukalanani. It's possible, but you can't do it exactly. Times have changed. We've accepted the changes, and can tolerate all of them, except for the vio-

lence and the crime. I think that what the U.S. government has been attempting to do is a fair deal.

NC: What differences do you see between Hawai'i today and the Hawai'i you grew up in?

Andrew: There are many differences in regard to family life. When I grew up we had no modern conveniences, but families were far more cohesive. We did everything together—sister, father, brother-in-law, the *ohana* [family] was very close. I grew up in a little village with a strong community life, but there were Japanese and Filipinos too. We'd go fishing, we'd see our parents, our uncles and aunts and so on; everybody always invited all their neighbors. There's still a lot of that going on, because other races have adapted to the *ohana* system. Life in a little village was a little fish bowl.

When the fleet came in, people would invite the sailors to their homes. We still have *aloha* for service personnel. In Honolulu, people would car pool, pick them up—there was a real sense of community. Now there is crime and fear of crime. That has changed everything. Grills go up on windows. I've seen the break with the past.

NC: Are you working for sovereignty?

Andrew: I'm not involved with any organization, but I have a cousin who is very active. They seem orga-

nized, and I think they're handling it well. I'm on the Kupuna [Elders'] Council, but I'm not sure why.

I think that the U.S. government's apology, the search for a constitution—these are steps forward. *But I also believe that here must be a place for non-Hawaiians in Hawai'i—this comes from my heart.* Hawai'i must include those brought in as laborers, but it must include the owners too. They served me well from the time I was born. If it hadn't been for them, I would not be where I am today.

NC: What have you done in the new renaissance of Hawaiian culture?

Andrew: I was a singer, and I was always interested in theater, musicals, and so on. My family spoke Hawaiian at home, but I don't know much. We children were discouraged from speaking it. But I love the English language.

I was interested in the Kupuna Program, so from 1982–87 I taught the language, through music, to children from Kindergarten to grade five. We went into their classrooms for half an hour or so each week. At first the teachers felt it was an intrusion, but now the *kupunas* are welcome, and it's mandated. Videos and records are now available to help study the language. The program I was in included everything, lesson plans, and stories to lift up individual *kupunas*. I also teach vacation bible school too. I love the

Uncle Andrew Ka`opu`iki a Kupuna

Member of Waiola UCC,
Lahaina, Maui, Hawai`i

stories of many cultures. I tell stories from Hawaiian culture, but I'm not really good at telling stories. But my music was well received.

NC: Do you feel that you've been able to retain your identity as a native Hawaiian?

Andrew: No, I feel that I have been totally Americanized and Westernized, especially because I worked for the government. I had to learn all over again what it was to be Hawaiian. Music and song were my ties to Hawai`i and the Hawaiian language. I balanced my life by being both American and Hawaiian.

NC: What is the role for *kupunas* like you in the sovereignty movement?

Andrew: The *kupuna* are the rulers in the sovereignty council. They are the advisers. I think they're at the top because they wouldn't be part of it otherwise.

NC: Do you favor independence, or nation-within-a-nation status, or have you made up your mind?

Andrew: Nation-within-a-nation is not a good idea. How can we separate? The ceded lands and the homelands could be given back gradually, but many connections must be made. Still, land is the big issue. When I worked for the government, I did the right-of-way for the army into the Crown Lands. There was a promise by the U.S. Government to restore the lands as

the price for getting the right-of-way, but you can see that it hasn't been kept.

Hawaiians who want to live on the homelands—which should be their land—are told that they need an infrastructure before they can build on the Homelands, but that there's no money to make an infrastructure. But I say that Hawaiians need to be on their own lands, with or without infrastructure.

NC: Where else has the United States affected Hawaiian life?

Andrew: The effects of the huge military establishment have been important in Hawai`i. It was okay in time of war, but they don't go home! We have to undo that. We have to undo much before we can proceed. I was the person who worked on a lot of contracts with the American government, so I know that the government hasn't lived up to them. There's a lot of money wasted, and the land mines are still on the lands they've given back. In nineteen years of working for the government I've seen a huge waste of money that could have been used for the Hawaiian people.

NC: Will there be a sovereign, independent nation in Hawai`i?

Andrew: I don't see it. There's too much to undo. You have to undo what the federal government has done before you can undo what the state and localities have done. But

we can *act* like a sovereign nation.

NC: What would it look like?

Andrew: Every piece of property, of the *aina*, the beautiful landscape, would be restored. People would be able to use the land—not for taro patches and coconut trees—but there wouldn't be any more condos either. I would like to see cocoa palms along the shore as I did when I was a boy, instead of condos and hotels. We could restore the beaches of our beautiful land. We could start fishing again, because we need to retain our Hawaiianness before we can be leaders.

NC: Who do you think your leaders should be? Should they be *ali`i* [nobles]?

Andrew: The leaders should be the most intelligent, the most caring persons, with lots of *aloha*. We have to keep *aloha*. Being *ali`i* should be based not on *koko* [blood] but on ability and service.

I don't see anyone with those qualifications at the moment—maybe Senator [Daniel] Akaka. But I have to give the present leaders credit for what they've done. Still, there are so many problems to undo. We have to have a clear understanding about eliminating those things the federal government has done which affect us all. But we need to keep moving toward unity. The spirit of *aloha* comes first, whatever God you worship. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

from *Interviews in Hawai'i*,
August, 1995

NC: How do you feel about the sovereignty movement?

Earl: We are supporters of the Sovereignty movement, but are not actively involved. But I would back it to the extreme. If Hawaiians could form into one unity, instead of being stuck in all these different groups which are competing with each other, it would be better. There are just too many small groups.

I was involved in one that started four or five years ago, but it wasn't unified. They organized here because they thought originally that Maui was the key to the islands, since it was originally the main island of the chain, and the very first capital of Hawai'i was Laha'ina. You need a strong organization before you can act, but some in the group were unhappy because some of those involved were not pure Hawaiian. That turns me off—I have Hawaiian blood, but my children and grandchildren are mixed. I got out of the group because they had no plan.

Barbara: I have always been a supporter too. Anyone who lives in Hawai'i should be, not just pure bloods. Hawaiians need to right many wrongs. But there are too many organizations, trying to do their own thing. Unity is needed to empower the people, but there

are many people who don't support sovereignty, and they need to be persuaded. This is their home too. Whites may feel that they are disliked because they are white.

The land situation doesn't look good. The ceded lands are owned in such ways that the young can't build. I don't know if they'll ever be able to work it out.

Earl: My parents spoke both English and fluent Hawaiian, but of course we weren't allowed to speak Hawaiian in school, and my parents spoke only English to their children. Now Hawaiians have to spend money to take classes to learn their own language! It is so sad. But my grandchildren are learning a little. [At this point his granddaughter volunteered that she knew how to count in Hawaiian]. Now at least they will learn about Hawai'i in school as we never did. I went to the Big Island [Hawai'i] when I was nine or ten, to a homestead school. There I learned Hawaiian crafts.

Barbara: I also went to school on the Big Island. My family was Japanese, and we were taught to look down on Hawaiians. We thought they didn't go to school, that they were lazy and shiftless. That turns out to be totally untrue. There are lots of intelligent Hawaiians and part Hawaiians. They need to fight for sovereignty.

NC: What about the plebiscite? How do you feel about it?

Earl: It's set up through the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. To vote you have to have some measure of Hawaiian blood. All you have to do is register and vote. But others should be included too. If you live in Hawai'i, and have been born and raised here, you are Hawaiian in my opinion.

NC: What would you like to see?

Earl: Looking back to the old ways and living that way is not for us. The U.S. has given us much of what we have today. It's one thing to say that we'll go it alone and that would be okay, but how would we begin to live that way? We're used to social services and so on. Where would I be without my social security? And what about the children? They would suffer a lot if we gave all this up. I think that nation-within-a-nation status would be best—not a total break.

What is really needed is a return of the lands. There's a lot of land which belongs to the Hawaiian people, but the government has been using it and giving us no compensation. It's one thing to say, "It's our land," but it's harder to get it back. For that you need money, lawyers, and so on.

Barbara and Earl Kukahiko

*Members of Waiola Church—UCC
Lahaina, Maui, Hawai'i*

Barbara: I have no serious idea about the right way to go. We have to be able to support ourselves; we need to survive. I think we should be a nation-within-a-nation.

NC: If there were one thing you wanted my readers to know or hear, what would it be?

Earl: I would tell people to come to Hawai'i, to see how much they'll enjoy it. We Hawaiians always sell our land, but people should come see what's left. They should come and see Maui; it has the best beaches. Once they saw it, we could influence tourists because

Maui's the best place in Hawai'i.

Barbara: I'm afraid that the sovereignty dispute may cause tourists to stay away. We need to explain the issue so that people will understand what we're talking about, and why we have a right to sovereignty. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

*from Interviews in Hawai'i,
August, 1995*

NC: How is the planning for the plebiscite coming?

SK: As you may know, the plebiscite was postponed. The issue is financial and educational. Our work is to educate and register people. We can't carry on the process properly without education. Moneys had been appropriated, the contracts were out, and the staffing set. Then the money was stopped. It's an excuse for preventing the necessary education on the issue.

NC: How were you planning to do the education?

SK: We were scheduled to do infomercials on TV. We wanted more than a routine campaign. We were planning to use infomercials which would run half an hour, with history as well as descriptions of the present situation, plus information about the plebiscite. We still need to enable the Hawaiian people to make a statement for the very first time. They've never had a chance. We planned to run these infomercials on prime time on national television.

NC: Would they run on the mainland too?

SK: Yes, and we were planning to tie them in with *Oprah* or other talk shows. There was to be outreach too, but now the new contracts and staff are all frozen. We've been in limbo since Janu-

ary of 1995. During that time I've taken every opportunity to go to the local communities.

NC: What is your reading of where people are on this issue?

SK: I have a spiritual sense in my heart that the majority of people are looking for change. It's time to take this chance.

NC: What exactly would the people be voting on?

SK: There is only one question on the ballot: "Shall the Hawaiian people elect delegates to propose a national Hawaiian government?"

NC: What will happen if there is a "no" vote?

SK: I haven't anticipated a "no" vote.

NC: If the vote is "yes," what is the next step?

SK: To convene a convention, to put it in place, and to elect delegates. Then bring all the ideas together—it will be very exciting.

NC: What about those opposed, such as the sovereignty groups that won't participate?

SK: It's very sad. Many of the members of those groups are the best informed and have the most new ideas of all the people, yet they are still opposed. I'm concerned that they're not involved,

but I'm more concerned that the majority of the people have been left behind. It would be a shame if only a few decided the future for the many. We need to bring to this issue a common understanding of our history, of the present, of the new directions needed.

Not enough Hawaiian history is taught in the schools. It's only been done for ten or fifteen years. My parents are both full blooded Hawaiians, but have no sense of their own history except for the land. This effort is the turning of the stone, the beginning anew. My generation has the skills and the knowledge to turn this to the benefit of the people. Stretched out before us are many new and wonderful opportunities.

I've been studying my genealogy, and I've seen generations behind me. That gives me a deep sense of responsibility to this generation. I can see a genealogy going back to the thirteenth century. The burden of carrying that is immense. They are behind us, lifting us, and they will carry us across.

NC: You seem very optimistic.

SK: I am.

NC: But what about those who say that the election is tainted because the members of the group were chosen by the state government?

Sol Kaho`ohalahala

Maui County Council Member
Organizer of
proposed plebiscite

SK: That has been resolved. That was the initial point for non-support, but the Council went to the Hawaiian communities, and took their distrust to the state legislature. They asked that those members be removed so that we could proceed with the trust of the Hawaiian people. The Hawaiian people themselves turned that around. One year later, they went back to legislature and removed the recommendation of reversal.

NC: What about using state money; does that taint it?

SK: No, we must take advantage of every opportunity. We can't fall back on distrust.

NC: How will native Hawaiians prove that they are eligible to vote?

SK: Documentation of any kind will be accepted. We can't allow the divisions generated by this invidious idea of blood quantum to continue. People not in Hawai'i can use absentee ballots. Some education will be needed to show some people how to use the registration form and how to be eligible, but the applications will be sent to the council for verification, and ballots will be sent out.

There won't be precinct elections, because Hawaiians are not used to voting at voting places. But it will be easy; even the stamp is already on the ballots if the voter is in the U.S. Anyone over eighteen can vote, and the ballot is bilingual.

We Hawaiians are trying to build community. This is not a racial issue. But we want to ask Hawaiians to understand who they are, and we can do that by posing the question, "What is your interest in this?" Some one once told me a story and a prophecy. She said that when the word of God was brought to the Hawaiian people, the people were diligent in learning and became Christians. Over time they've been true to that knowledge. But eventually, those who brought the word of God failed. The task for the Hawaiian people is to be true to the essence of Christianity. If they are, then all that has taken will be returned to them.

If we carry this forward into the future, the *kupunas* who came before us ask us to carry this on and accept it. If we believe this, only good will come about. People need to understand who we are and where we come from. We are

not just standing up for our political rights. There's much more to it than that. Queen Lili'oukalani would have been a failure had she not lived up to her belief in a Christian God. That history precedes us, and we believe that truth and justice will prevail. I trust that good will come out of these terrible times.

I ask you not to look at this as a racial issue, or to ask people to define a Native Hawaiian or to define a *haole* in racial terms. You need to look at it as broadly as we do. There are many, many races in Hawai'i, and we seek an all-inclusive nation. My wife is Caucasian, and my children are mixed. The real decision before us is to envision what a sovereign Hawai'i will look like, an independent Hawai'i. That is the next step. Then discussions about other issues would be appropriate. We can't decide that as yet because we need to discuss all other options.

These are issues for all of us. We need to let any one who wants to become a citizen of Hawai'i. But I am very hopeful, because I know that we are more together than we ourselves believe. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

from Interviews in Hawai'i,
August, 1995

Those interviewed are all young professionals, native Hawaiians, called together to be interviewed for this issue by Kekapa Lee.

NC: Is there is a distinctively Hawaiian culture?

All: Absolutely.

John: There are three major pieces in Hawaiian culture: First, family, our sense of *ohana*. The Hawaiian mode never strays far from family. Second: *aina*, our tie to the land. We don't see the land in the Western sense—that's been the problem since the contact with the West. We've really been screwed up by the Western sense of land. We need to see it the way Hawaiians do, as related to us. The third point is *aloha*, that's the trilogy. *Ohana, Aina, Aloha.*

We Hawaiians did very well in a self-sufficient economy. We have to ask why it broke down. Now we have foster care rather than *kupuna* [elders] caring for our children. We're a healthy race, but there's been a breakdown. We need a lot of good projects, with a lot of the basics like bonding and interacting with people. We've done planting programs geared to the *aina*. Those projects make you proud, and give you self esteem. We feel good when we're together, when together we *pule* [pray] before eating, when we work together.

Iris: We're a blend. We must perpetuate the culture, we cannot lose it. Yes, we should take the best from all the cultures here or that we know about, but we mustn't lose what is ours. Economic self determination is essential to the future. Without that, sovereignty and everything else is just a dream. Part of realizing the dream is getting some of the *aina* back. We have to be in control of our own resources and of our own futures. We need to be looking for political sovereignty as a state of mind, a state of state, a state of politics.

Kekapa: But there's also a need for realism. We can't go back to kingdom days, the days of the Queen. How do we get the best of all the cultures which are here? How do we weld together a system which is Hawaiian, but which can survive economically? How can we support families, and base our society on our Hawaiianness and on the best of all else? How will that play out politically, economically, morally? Who will lead? There are no *ali'i*. It's an enormous job. We need to reinvent society.

Kehau: Hawai'i is inclusive of everybody. Right now there are two huge land trusts: the ceded lands and the Hawaiian homelands. Those are *our own* land entities, our basis. But only one fifth of the lands—even the Crown lands—ever comes to the Native Hawai-

ians. Will the state of Hawai'i give them back to us? It will not.

NC: What about Kaho'olawe, the Island that the U.S. had been using as a firing range, but which it returned to the Hawaiian people? Can that be used for a Hawaiian homeland, for people to build on?

Kehau: The current plan is not to make it livable, but to use it as a cultural bank.

Iris: You can go there to regain cultural pride. It is the only island without houses. There is a spiritual sense there. You are in touch with the *aina*; that overtook me when I went there, a sense of being connected to the land.

NC: How do you view the sovereignty movement?

Kehau: The sovereignty movement is at the forefront of all social movements here in Hawai'i, and affects our whole culture. It has come a long, long way in just ten years. It calls for self realization, education, and awareness for all Hawaiian people. I see a progression so that it's becoming more and more what the majority of Hawaiians feel. Once the media picked it up we got a more civilized discussion. And the more proactive we are, the more remedies develop. One major contribution of the movement is that it highlights those activities which

Kehaulani Filiamoe`atu, John Tomoso, Iris Mountcastle, Tasha Kama, Kekapa Lee

Interviewed at
the Queen Lili`oukalani Children's Center
Wailuku, Maui

are detrimental to the life of native Hawaiians. You must understand that it has only been in recent years that Hawaiians have been able to read the laws which were set up for them, and to understand the intent of those laws.

John: The movement has come a long way, but it has a long way to go. When I look at the issue, especially within my own *ohana*, I see many different views. There's no one definition within my family. Yet despite these differences, they are all united in the need for sovereignty.

Kekapa: We all know that we need sovereignty.

NC: Are you bothered by the fact that there are so many groups and so many different goals?

John: Not really. Sovereignty is a *pono* issue, an issue of justice and what is right. There's no need for one definition. But there is a need for a more unified agreement on how to proceed. That has to be determined by native Hawaiians themselves. The state government should not intervene in what is essentially an internal issue. The less state and government involvement there is, the better it will be for us all.

Iris: I am a social worker. Because I take care of children, I am trying to be culturally sensitive, which

means encouraging the *ohana* to do child care, not the state. When I look at sovereignty, I need to be culturally sensitive without hurting the children. I see sovereignty as a means to perpetuate our endangered culture. We desperately need to change a lot of laws. Sovereignty might be the way to do it. We need to perpetuate the culture and carry out the Queen's legacy. The group I work for has no position on sovereignty at the moment, but it may need to take a stand. So far we have done education and panels on the issue.

NC: How do you feel about the plebiscite?

John: I want to involve myself in community processes, and the plebiscite is a community process. It would empower those who voted in it.

Kekapa: Many people are against it, because the state is involved. Still, no one else is doing it or anything like it. But there are funding problems.

John: But the hue and cry about the plebiscite, both for and against it, serves a good. From that discussion a way to continue might arise, one which wasn't tainted by involvement with the government. So the troubles are a blessing in disguise. I don't like it when people grumble about the way things are and then don't take ad-

vantage of opportunities when they arise.

Kehau: I think that the plebiscite is an excellent opportunity. It will be a forum for issues to come to the forefront. The history of the plan to hold a plebiscite and of the Sovereignty Elections Council involved the pulling together of many grassroots groups. It is a coalition made of different groups. It's ironic that some of the very groups that caused this to happen have backed off now, since it's an excellent opportunity.

Kekapa: Maybe they're scared that their perspective would lose.

Kehau: It shows their insecurity, their fear that their view would not prevail. But the plebiscite and the discussion around it could allow the airing of many different view points. To say otherwise is defeatist. I see an undercurrent of defeatism here. The plebiscite would tell you the tone of the day. Hawaiians tend to be very traditional, very conservative. They need more education toward self expression. That would be one result of the plebiscite—they'd learn to express themselves.

John: Hawaiians have to be able to feel, "I know that I have a place, and this is it. I have no other place, no other home." Once they know that, they can put *pilikia* [troubles] in their proper perspective.

Kekapa: We need to be proud that we are Hawaiians, that we have all these races in us . . . **John:** Yes, we need pride . . . **Kekapa:** We don't have it yet. We need to be Hawaiians, proud of being part of a world community.

Iris: I look for the development of leadership in the next generation of children. We need to start to measure the gifted and talented, but to measure them not just in academic terms. Development means to know what it is to be Hawaiian. I grew up with losses, with labels, with a father who didn't speak Hawaiian. We all need to show what it is to be Hawaiian.

Kekapa: The next generation is the key, but it's not too late for us. We can be the guides.

NC: What do you see as encouraging signs?

Kehau: More and more we hear Hawaiian as well as English everywhere.

Iris: Language is the key. There are lots of good programs going on. There's a sense of pride in just owning the process. If you can't own the process, you feel alienated. Because Hawaiians do not have Hawai'i, they say, "I have nothing." They are without pride, they still feel that they are on the wrong side of the fence.

John: There is a perpetual wrestling in the community about how do we handle that, this need to feel pride and ownership.

Kekapa: Is Sovereignty a pie-in-the-sky solution?

Kehau: Sometimes I feel that it is.

John: I feel that sovereignty is beginning, even though I've got the *pala pala* [paper certification, degrees] and some would say that I have gone to the white man's system.

Kehau: As we grew up, the educational process excluded our color. As persons of color, we were inferior, we were made to feel that way again and again. Yet Hawaiians and Polynesians are a most spiritual people.

Kekapa: Christianity has a narrow view of spirituality.

John: But I see encouraging signs. Look at the Hawaiian Homes Commission. We have a \$600,000 settlement. This is people giving up their power. This movement, this sovereignty movement, has helped produce this money.

Kekapa: Tyrone [Reinhart], Kaleo [Patterson], Kekuni [Blaisdell] are the prophetic voices that led to this process.

Iris: I would like to see Hawaiians

raised to a better social level. This whole issue about their place on the social ladder is not a racial issue. It's a socio-economic issue, and yet people insist on seeing it in racial terms. It's not racial. We need to raise people to a level at which they have choices. I am terribly bothered whenever people connect social problems to race. Ours are socio-economic problems, problems of poverty and class. Sovereignty can help us deal with these problems.

Kehau: It comes back to control. If you have choices, you are satisfied. If not, that is oppression. We have been told from day one, don't speak Hawaiian, it won't get you anywhere. We were also told that what we were was servants, and that if we wanted jobs we could get them in the tourism industry. I don't want that for my children. I want them to know that the bloods that they have inherited are valuable, that they are all valuable. I was educated in the tourist field. That's where the opportunities were. Tourism was the burgeoning field and Hawai'i was viewed as a commodity.

But I saw the ills developing. People have fallen by the wayside. They raped the island to sell it. Yet our people are still here. I don't want my children working in tourism, even though the state govern-

ment tells us all the time that everybody profits from tourism. You watch that and you become angry—especially when you have a person at poolside sipping an exotic drink while natives Hawaiians pick up the towels and clean up their dirt. Choice—that’s the issue, and we haven’t had choice.

John: I love the idea of sovereignty. We’ll come to it. Meanwhile, we have a responsibility to live in the reality of Hawai’i as it is now. It is not *pono* to forget the reality. While working for other things, we need to live in reality now. Because of the kind of work I do, I get accused of being a co-opted Hawaiian by people who won’t pay their taxes. But I say, “Get real, learn how to live in this system for now, pay up or shut up.”

Iris: What you say is feasible, but there are problems. Taxes are going up so fast that many Hawaiians are losing their land. I don’t know if I’ll be able to keep my family’s land.

John: People have to take the responsibility for checking the tax laws. We have depoliticized ourselves since the overthrow, and of course after that a lot of information was withheld deliberately so that we would accept our lot. But the other side of *pono* is to behave responsibly as we seek change.

NC: If there were one thing you wanted to tell my readers, what would it be?

Kehau: I’d ask them to help us realize and recognize our own sovereignty. That doesn’t mean secession; it could mean nation-within-a-nation status. But whatever we have, we have to be able to make our own choices, to improve ourselves and our destiny. I like the idea of a plebiscite because it offers us for the first time the opportunity to choose. Having choices is civilizing.

Iris: I agree. I look for state-within-a-state, with specific laws for na-

tive Hawaiians. We need laws to protect family lands. Much pasture land is now becoming available, and it’s very valuable. Western society doesn’t give a rip if people lose their lands. We need special amendments for native Hawaiians to bring them to level where they have meaningful choice. I don’t want to see them harmed, and land is a sore point. But I look toward a future in which we have sovereignty, with special amendments and equal footing. There is much anger in my heart, much pain. But ethnicity isn’t the issue. Sovereignty is a vehicle to help us mold what we can be.

Tasha [*who joined us late*]: I plead for people to support the Native Hawaiians. The factions can and will come together. “United we stand” is true. Support us and support self determination. Talk to legislators and get them to say yes to what Native Hawaiians ask for. Trust us; trust what we are now. □

Voices of the Kanaka Maoli

from Interviews in Hawai'i,
August, 1995

Apela Sequeria is an Oneida, a member of the Six Nations; Keola Sequeria, a Native Hawaiian, is a Kahuna Ka'lai wa'a, a Master Canoe builder, and a Kahuna Ki'a, a master carver.

NC: How did you become involved in the sovereignty movement?

Apela: I came to a sense of my identity and of spiritual awakening through the American Indian Movement. I did my doctoral dissertation on sovereignty and the need for Native people to revitalize their culture and have their own spirituality. For native people, the issue is continuity. You have to be an activist in a spiritual way. For Native Americans, the issue is to make sure that we continue to exist as a people.

Keola: I'm not directly involved in any particular group. There's not enough unity among them, and some are so extreme they're not worth dealing with. No matter how you look at it, whether to be a state or not sidesteps the issue. The real issue is that some American laws are applied to our indigenous rights.

I'm a shipbuilder, but I need to get permission to cut a tree! My harvesting rights are denied me, as are my rights in relation to the ocean—it's all the same thing. No one pays attention to how careful I am when I take a tree. On the same way, we Hawaiians must re-

main open to ocean. But it's a farce to say that there's access. The ocean is being polluted so badly that there's suntan oil in the seaweed. There's no balance anymore.

Apela practices the religion of an old culture. That is often in violation of laws. They might win in court, but it would take time. We're going about sovereignty in a little different way. We're living it. We're restoring old places; we're involved in the education of Native Hawaiians. But we're educating through art. It's hard to explain this to people. Even some Native Hawaiians don't understand their own tradition. They've been taught to think that the old ways are evil. That's the opposite of the truth.

My wife is a big help as I research native Hawaiian religion. A lot was written down and then suppressed. I've always understood the general concepts. But Christianity tried to destroy it. There is a one-to-one relationship between me and the spirits: I know that the spirits live here, and concern themselves with men. There's a God, and these spirits are undergods.

Apela: No native people—neither Native American nor Native Hawaiian—had a religion, but they all had spirituality, which was revealed through nature, dreams, and experience. You can predict human behavior through signs,

but it takes years of training. The *kuhuna* system in Hawai'i was specialized. The same was true of the Six Nation people. From the Native point of view there's a problem in describing ourselves in Western terms. We are constantly on the defensive. We always ask ourselves, "Was I authentic today?" The Western approach labels our kind of spirituality "dysfunctional behavior." But Westerners suffer from *dissociative schizmogogenesis*, a profound alienation from all life except themselves. They let linear thinking and the rational take over.

There is no respectable forum within which to talk about intuitive moments. Yet Native Americans are a mirror to the Western mind. What happens to us happens to you. Among Westerners there is a profound dislocation, a spiritual lack; it's a form of mental illness. People say to natives, "Go ahead and believe in spirits if it works for you." *But we believe in them because they exist!* In this difference we see the power of a mind set or a paradigm. The rational mind allows compartmentalizing.

You see this difference in the actions of Native Americans and Native Hawaiians. In America, whenever the personal freedom of American Indians is limited, there's big trouble. But in Hawai'i, the traditional people meet their opponents and give them *lais* and

Apela and Keola Sequeria

Lahaina, Maui, Hawai'i

try to explain why the earth should not be hurt!

Keola: Christianity has icons, saints, the Madonna, God. That's about where it ends. But the Native Hawaiian has an acknowledgment of the spirituality that's in the human body, in everything around us, and in everything else—rain, clouds, trees, lightning. We are a product of nature, tied in to whole universe.

NC: Granted these cultural differences, what would sovereignty for Native Hawaiians look like? How would you explain it to Westerners?

Keola: It's very complicated. Hawaiians are only ten percent of the population of Hawai'i, because we're very mixed. We are not going to inherit the state; realistically, that's not going to happen. Maybe we can get a nation-within-a-nation, with reserves. Maybe, we could get some places where the Hawaiian people can retreat. Even if it's only ten percent of the islands, there we could make our own laws. Maybe we shouldn't have to pay for water, and we could regulate as they did in the old days.

But many Hawaiians are not ready

for any change. The Israelites were left in the desert for forty years. Maybe that much time is needed for us too. Our generation revolted against the system, and got the ball rolling. We did this despite the fact that we were brought up to believe that Hawaiian culture was bad and Hawaiians were stupid. This generation says, "Let's emphasize the good." It's encouraging that each generation knows more about history and culture, that there are now fluent speakers of Hawaiian, that people are starting to think in Hawaiian. The next generation will find the solution.

Apela: Hope is the spirituality we're talking about. Rationally, there's no reason for any of us to have hope, but we all have it. We're all concerned with how to bring ourselves back on course through our children, with how to raise kids to be what they are and be proud of it.

NC: Some of the people I've talked to think in terms of a return to the times when there was a non-currency culture. Does that appeal to you?

Keola: That's ridiculous. We can't be one-hundred percent as it was.

This is not the Hawai'i of our forefathers.

Apela: We reflect our own experience. Native people have carried the experiment of living without money to its limits.

Keola: I was brought up Christian, but peace of mind and tolerance come from my present belief system. This is a twenty-four-hour-a-day a day thing, not one hour on Sunday. Christians have to look at themselves and live Christianity twenty-four hours a day. But I don't ram my beliefs down other people's throats. It's personal, and you live it each day. We have to realize that the spirit is in everyone. If you fully understand that concept, you look at life totally differently. But if you think everything is inanimate, you can't live right. If you respect everything as a spirit, then you begin to live in ways that could change the whole nation.

Apela: There's a notion that is purely Hawaiian: the idea of *Aloha*, the breath of god. If you really understand that word, you feel the breath, the breath of God. It is a soft feeling in which, when you hear bird song, you feel the breath of God. □

Some Legacies of the Missionary Era: Theological Issues for American Indian Christians

In preparation for a consultation with our Hawaiian and Samoan brothers and sisters about our theological and spiritual situation as Christians, I have written this particular paper to present an American Indian perspective. Struggle, mostly at a basic survival level, characterizes congregational life for Indian Christians. They are always dealing with overwhelming external issues that eat away at the vitality of Indian communities and which are reflected internally in the life of congregations. But Indian churches also deal internally with issues they inherited through their unique history, issues grounded in the missionary era which produced them. This paper attempts to begin to identify several issues with which Indian congregations must deal, but which are not often identified.

Obviously, not all Indians will agree with the statement which follows, but it is an attempt to begin the dialogue.

Statement of the Problem

A primary reality for Indian Christians today is the heritage of the white missionary. The missionary provided the shape of the faith with its theological thrust, its linkage with Euro-North American cul-

ture and triumphalism, its focus on personal piety to the exclusion of community development and justice concerns, and its lack of Indian leadership development.

In balance, this missionary heritage is profoundly ambiguous. Affirmatively, the heritage provided an introduction to the Christ, the Bible, and the Church as the nurturing and witnessing community of the people of God; however, it also left some difficult consequences. The primary problem emerges from the complete linkage the white missionaries made between the Kerygma of the Christian faith and their Euro-North American culture. This linkage led to judging Indian culture and traditions as pagan, to naming Indian people as "savages," and the imposition of an agricultural way of life as that which would "civilize" Indians by replacing Indian ways.

The Euro-North American Cultural Bias as Central to the White Missionary Movement

When Europeans returned to Spain following Columbus' first trip, they debated whether Indians had souls or whether they were animals.² If they were animals they could be herded and

enslaved without sin or with impunity. If they had souls, of course, they then became subject to evangelization. The Roman Church led the battle to have Indians declared human with souls, and after winning that victory, the Church proceeded to evangelize Indians.³

Immediately, Europeans determined that Indians were not civilized,⁴ so conversion to the Christian faith quickly became a major part of the civilizing process. Missionaries and the military from several European nations, and ultimately the United States army, joined forces in the battle for pacification and enculturation. During this era (1500 to 1890), Indians were labelled as "savages," and the culture was judged to be pagan.

The missionary bodies joined forces with the federal government of the U.S.A., particularly the military, by establishing the strategy of turning Indians away from their traditional culture to that of agriculture based on private property and the profit motive. The goal was to "civilize" Indians by making them into white farmers, particularly in the mode of Thomas Jefferson, who believed republican America depended upon its being an agricultural society.⁵

Recalling the events in the subjugation of the Indians, the Reverend C. H. Hall,⁶ pioneer missionary

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Norman W. Jackson

Conference Minister
Hawai'i Conference
United Church of Christ

and a prominent figure in North Dakota history, said, "What military tactics failed to do, religious work did with love."

The significant phase in this missionary's life is the contrast between himself and Custer. Both men started out at the same time *with practically the same object in mind, to subdue the Indians*—but with totally different weapons. Custer's expedition was a tragedy and failure, but this missionary's work is probably the greatest work that any one man has done for the Indians of North Dakota.⁷

Some of the Issues Identified:

1. To Be Indian or Christian

There are Indian Christians alive today who experienced the demand they must choose between being Indian or being Christians, that a person cannot be both. Since Indian cultures were considered to be pagan, their stories of creation, their beliefs, and their ceremonies were expressions of paganism. To embrace the Christian faith meant turning away from Indian culture, Indian ways, and Indian traditions. Even today there are some Indian Christians who believe it is wrong to go to a powwow.

For the missionaries to have demanded that an Indian choose between being Indian or Christian reflects an uncritical naïvete about

the relationship between faith and culture. We have come a long way in our cultural understandings as well as our theological understandings, and now realize this relationship is profoundly complex. Currently, it is a major area of study and work,⁸ with many questions about how to communicate faith cross-culturally remaining open and without strategies or answers.

As a result, some Indian groups are raising questions and exploring whether one can be Christian and Indian at the same time in some new ways. In a workshop on "An Indian Expression of the Christian Faith," which I led with Indian people, I was asked, "Should Indians even want to be Christian, adopting a white man's Christ?" While there are many ways to respond to that question, it is more important to make clear the assumptions, which underlie it—Christ is white, or for white people, or is a white possession. These assumptions naturally grow from the ambiguous heritage and history of the white missionary movement, and demonstrate how easily Indian people have internalized the mentality of the dominant culture.⁹

It is important to testify to the integrity, commitment, and good intentions of the majority of missionaries. From our perch in the

closing years of the 20th Century, it is easy to make devastating judgments about missionaries. Some missionaries taught agriculture, manual skills, etc., not because they saw themselves as a part of the civilizing, pacifying and enculturating process of Manifest Destiny, but because they were convinced Indian people would need these skills to survive. "The whole concept of 'bringing civilization to the savages' was understood by the missionaries as a loving social action."¹⁰

2. The Nature of the Church's Mission

Throughout history, the Church's understanding of its mission included four foci, with particular traditions or groups emphasizing one or two of the four. These foci are: evangelization (sometime degenerating to mean conversion), service (charity and help in disasters), transformation of the world (justice, peace, liberation and changing of structures and cultures), and nurturing the internal community (worship, Christian education, unity, and pastoral care). The white missionary heritage focussed on evangelization (meaning, in this instance, conversion), transformation of Indian People from Indian culture to the dominant culture (rather than transforming elements of Indian

culture), and nurturing the community. Since evangelism meant converting Indians to the dominant culture, transformation merged into conversion. Nurture meant an emphasis on personal piety and individual morality.

To suggest the early mission to Indians included transformation of Indian culture may be giving that mission movement a large benefit of the doubt. I have already tried to identify the negative judgments made of Indian culture and tradition, so the mission effort was not so much a transformation of elements within Indian culture as a pulling of Indians away from their culture.

The result is that today many Indian churches express a kind of 19th century evangelicalism bordering on fundamentalism characterized by personal piety and morality. The theology is authorized by an uncritical and selective reading of the Bible, and by limited and selected parts of the Christian Tradition. Sermons by Indians are often low keyed presentations, filled with stories with obvious morals expressing the *oughts*, *musts*, and *shoulds* of personal living. I have seen some Indian pastors imitate revival preachers. Occasionally, the preacher will wander away from these stories based on a particularly narrow hermeneutic and be-

gin expressing in narrative form wisdom from Indian cultures. When the latter happens, congregations tend to be more attentive.

The Christian faith and the Indian traditions tend to live side by side in today's Indian communities, going along parallel tracks and rarely ever meeting in authentic dialogue. Many Indian church buildings have little in their decor that would differentiate them from buildings in any part of rural America, although recently, some congregations have begun to display Indian designs, quilts, pictures, etc., in a new way.

Occasionally, Indian ceremonies, (e.g. smudging, pipe ceremonies and healing ceremonies) will be held in conjunction with, or as part of, Christian worship services, but I have rarely seen a conscious attempt to interpret their meaning within the context of the service. I believe that Indian people who make Christian commitments would benefit from a thorough exploration of how these various Indian ceremonies can be used with integrity for both Indian traditions and Christian worship. This is a subject about which there are strong feelings, and in which constructive work would be very beneficial.

For the most part, Indian churches use a liturgy traditional to the par-

ticular confessional history of their denomination, unaffected by much from Indian culture. Even most hymns in the Dakota Hymnal are translations from well known Protestant hymns.

The service and transformation dimensions of Christian mission are rare in the life of Indian churches.

4. Self-Esteem, Leadership, and the Missionary Era

It may have been different in other denominations, but in the United Church of Christ very little was done to encourage and develop Indian leadership for Indian churches. Those Indians who did move into leadership positions were normally under the supervision of white missionaries or pastors. The leadership dearth, combined with the heritage of judging Indian culture as pagan and Indian ways as uncivilized, has left a deep reservoir of low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence, and dependence upon the white missionary and, later, the white pastor in charge. This gets reinforced as well as exacerbated by the racism which is endemic to the dominant culture.

Self-determination, combined with the end of the missionary era, means that we are now in a very difficult state of transition. Lacking in Indian pastors, we

must rely on non-Indian leadership that, to be effective, must be extraordinarily sensitive and skilled in cross-cultural relationships in order to escape falling into a paternalistic pattern. I have not seen, or developed, and adequate orientation/education program for non-Indian people who have accepted the challenge and opportunity of serving Indian congregations. But such a program must be in place soon.

An Indian Expression of the Christian Faith

Following the centuries of European expansion and western domination over the globe, many people adopted the Christian faith. Of those who received the faith from Europeans or North Americans, American Indian people are amongst those who have not developed the faith in their own cultural forms of expression. Indian pastors, members, and theologians have not done much constructive theological work, and have tended to rely on dominant cultural expressions of the faith, especially on the prevailing 19th century evangelism found in many reservation Indian churches. Much work needs to be done in the area of indigenization, or contextualization of the faith.

When Indian churches lose vitality, members, and especially

youth, the strategic response has frequently been to redouble the very efforts that have contributed to the loss. I have observed Indian churches that are struggling for survival, which seem to be losing ground, which simply press harder the kind of evangelicalism that failed to bring a response. A renewed vitality in Indian churches awaits efforts at an Indian expression of the faith, an expression which utilizes Indian forms of communication, and relates in living ways the spirit and power of the gospel to the pain, needs, and aspirations of Indian people. This means that an Indian expression of the faith will not answer the questions that evangelicalism does, since those questions were posed from a white rural culture of several generations ago. Particular Indian problems, realities and spiritualities will give a different form to the Christian faith than that to which we are accustomed.¹¹

Non-Indian pastors who are culturally sensitive, who value Indian traditions and culture, and who are serving Indian congregations, have a particularly difficult time with the contextualization questions. They realize that there must be an Indian expression of the Gospel, but in their sensitivity, they also realize they are not the ones to engage in the task. I think it will be important to find a

creative *and faithful* role for the caring-and-sensitive non-Indian pastor in the constructive theological task that lies before us.

Perhaps the primary problem in the ambiguity of the missionary heritage is that many Indians do not see an issue here, and do not see that the end of the missionary era has created a new setting in which to do ministry. There are many theological questions. While the early mission focussed on evangelism and nurture, presently Indian churches seem to focus primarily on nurture. In survival communities, that is very understandable. But the devastating conditions of Indian life, the complex justice issues, the profound difference between Indian culture and that culture to which the evangelicalism was addressed, as well as alcoholism, poverty, and the racism which continues to suffocate Indian communities and people, are often ignored by the churches rather than being the primary foci of their present mission. □

Notes

¹ This paper was prepared for a planning session for a consultation on indigenous churches (American Indian, Hawaiian, and Samoan) to explore the question of whether these peoples had enough issues in common to authorize mutual exploration. The Consultation was spon-

sored by the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries.

² Coulter, Robert, "The Moral Crisis of Indian Law," *Church And Society*, January/February, 1985, page 20.

³ Whether being judged as "human" by Europeans led to a better fate is difficult to assess.

⁴ Jennings, Francis, *The Invasion Of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York and London, 1975. See especially Chapter 1. "Crusader Ideology—and an Alternative" for a scholarly, historical description of European Ideology around paganism, civilizing savages, etc., as it relates to American Indians.

⁵ Takaki, Ronald, T., *Iron Cages: Race and Culture in 19th-Century American*, University of Washington Press, Seattle, 1979, page 37. Takaki provides a thorough and scholarly analysis of relationships between the founding fathers and racial groups, particularly Indians, Blacks, Hispanics and Asians, and how the views of the dominant culture leaders like Jefferson provided the ideological

bases used later for Indian killing and other forms of racism.

⁶ UCC people will recognize the name of Charles H. Hall as the first missionary to the Ft. Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, who started the churches which today exist as members of the Ft. Berthold Council of Congregational Churches. A home for youth in Bismarck, ND, is named after Hall.

⁷ Case, Reverend and Mrs. Harold W., *100 Years At Ft. Berthold: The History of Ft. Berthold Indian Mission, 1876-1976*, 1977, Page 95 (emphasis added).

⁸ E.g., Fitzpatrick, JS, Joseph P., *One Church Many Cultures*. Also, articles and issues of "International Review of Mission," World Council of Churches, especially Vol. LXXIV, No. 294, "Gospel and Culture," and Vol. LXXV, No. 299, "Reflections on Mission."

⁹ Roman, Alfonso. In a personal communication to the author, Roman identifies from his Puerto Rican experience, "It also has to do with what in our colonial experience is called colonized mentality,

the adopting of the values of the 'white masters.'"

¹⁰ Maxfield, The Reverend Charles, in a personal communication to the author in response to an early draft of this paper. Maxfield states the conundrum, "What from the missionaries was seen as a loving act, by the Indians was seen as a controlling act. What the missionaries called social action, the Indians felt as paternalism." I presume this ambiguity would include the white missionary's leading the fight against the Garrison Dam which effectively destroyed traditional life at Ft. Berthold.

¹¹ There are many resources for this theological struggle, beginning with the aspirations, experiences, and faith of Indian people in Indian Communities. Scholarly resources include: Schreiter, Robert J., *Constructing Local Theologies*, Filbeck, David, *Social Context And Proclamation*. Fleming, Bruce, C.E., *Contextualization Of Theology*, Trompf, G.W., *The Gospel Is Not Western: Black Theologies from the Southwest Pacific*. See also many issues of the "International Review of Mission."

Voices from the National Gathering of American Indian UCC Members

Bismark, North Dakota, June 1995

Note: This reflection was transcribed from her videotaped presentation at the National Gathering of American Indians, UCC, Bismarck, ND, June 1-4, 1995.

Usually when I speak I try to be last, because then I can say, "I was going to say that, but they've said it already." Then I don't have to say much. When you're first, it's harder.

It's a wonderful thing that you are doing at this gathering. We need to do more. All who are the leaders in our communities and our churches and our reservations need to stand up and be counted. Because, once you stand up for something, you are an advocate, you have to back it up, because if you back down, everybody else will, and you won't accomplish what you are wanting to do to help people.

I want to share with you a custom that the Sioux people have, at least the Lakota people. We don't talk about ourselves. We don't brag about ourselves. We say that bragging "stinks," so we don't talk about ourselves or brag. Others are supposed to do it for you. A long time ago the people had a man going around a circle of teepees—he was called a *eyapaha*, a town crier—and he would tell about the individual and that person's accomplishments so that they didn't have to say it themselves.

You notice that if you say, "I, I, I," people don't like it, and they don't feel like supporting you and your program. But if you say, "We," then you're including them, and they feel that they have a part. A person can't accomplish great things by themselves; you have to do it with the people. If they support you, you are bound to succeed.

We have a program that's called the Lakota TB and Health Association that was organized back in 1953 before the Indian Health Service came to work with us. Tuberculosis was killing off our people—it was very communicable. So the chairman of the tribe and the superintendent and someone from the state health department got together with the tribe, and they started to have workshops to teach the people about the disease. They brought in the community leaders—not the tribal council and those who were "way up there," but the community leaders at the local level, who were concerned and cared about others—and they had workshops where they had microscopes and they showed what the germ looked like. They taught in our own language what to do and how to go about preventing this disease.

They were successful, and other reservations and tribes heard about it, and eventually about eighteen

Eunice Larabee

*CAIM Leader
Lakota Sioux*

tribes in this area were members of this organization. They almost eradicated TB. But now I guess it's coming back because there's a resistance to the medications.

This organization is still in existence, and it is such a successful health organization that we got national recognition for doing what had to be done. But we did it together, we didn't do it by saying, "I." You have to be careful about that word. So that's why I can't say anything about myself.

I was born in the Cheyenne River Reservation, in a log house. I grew up there and went to school. The first year I went to school we had school in a log house. But then they decided we should be near another school, because it was too hard for us to go to school—waiting in the snow and carrying our sleds—so we went to a place called Thunder Butte community until we were older. Then we went to the boarding school in the old agency, the Cheyenne agency, until we were in eighth grade.

My sister and I graduated from eighth grade, but they decided to offer another year, so we went to the ninth grade. Then we went to Lawrence, and went to a high school there and graduated. My sister and I both had two years of business school. After we graduated from that I came home to

Cheyenne River, and I've been there ever since.

I worked for a while for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but the tribal council people were older men who didn't have much education and didn't speak much English. The younger people made fun of them (they said that they don't know what they were doing and they didn't know what it was all about). That made me mad because I knew that they had a lot of knowledge and experience, and they needed to be shown respect for being in that capacity, as tribal council persons. So I quit my job with the BIA and I worked with the tribe. I've been involved in tribal affairs ever since. I was on a tribal council for twelve years, and then after my husband died I couldn't travel around like I did so I slowed down. But I'm still an advocate for Indian affairs, tribal affairs, and I always will be.

While I was on the tribal council I served on the health committee, and I really learned a lot from the Indian health people. At the beginning we had doctors, young doctors, who would come to the reservation. It would take them a while to come down to our level, and then it would take us a while to come up to their level, but eventually we had a meeting of minds, and we were able to start working together. In those days it

seemed like whenever I would start a sentence, to tell them something, they thought they knew what I was going to say, so before I could finish the sentence they would finish it for me. We don't have that happening any more.

We have such a turnover of doctors now, and now we get along, and that's it. But more and more we're discovering that we are affected differently by diseases. For instance, an Indian person with diabetes can walk around with a blood sugar of 600, but a non-Indian person with a blood sugar of 600 would be in a coma. So there is some makeup to the Indian people that we inherited from our forefathers that seems to affect us differently when it comes to the development of these diseases.

We're finding that with a lot of things, including alcoholism. But I read the other day that they are studying to see if the genes of Indian people affect the scholastic achievement tests that they give Indian children. When I read that, I thought, "My gosh, how far can you go?" So we're at a state where they always want to find something wrong with us. For instance, mental health. We had mental problems in the old days, but we kinda knew how to cope with it so that we didn't end up in a mental institution.

Yet despite that, non-Indian people tell us that our cultural values are not good. They tell us that we shouldn't teach our children to be so generous and to share. But I think that sharing and generosity are Christian values, and the value of saving and—should I call it *acquisitiveness*? I don't want to say *greed*—those values conflict with what the Indian people teach their children. The values we teach are Christian values even though we didn't know that they were. (You know, we were just roaming around the prairie being heathen and we didn't know that we had good Christian customs; we just observed them.) So when the missionaries came they told us that what we did was wrong.

We did learn about stealing—it was wrong to steal, and they were always telling us about the Indian people stealing horses. They used to steal Crow horses, because the Crows had some of the best looking and fastest horses in the United States, and they really watched them and took care of them. There they'd be in their teepees, sleeping, with the horse tied to their big toe, and you had to be extra crafty and extra sly and sneaky to be able to be able to get that horse untied and to steal it. So when you returned with a Crow horse you were given an Eagle feather and you were hon-

ored. And if you stole a Crow woman it was doubly an honor!

But then Christianity said it was wrong, and you can't steal—and besides, non-Indian people strung you up on a tree if you stole horses. So we quit stealing horses, but I guess we still steal women because there are such things as divorces nowadays.

We learned that a lot of things that we were doing might be wrong. But basically, I think that the Indian religion was parallel to Christianity in a lot of ways. We didn't know about Christianity, but we did parallel things.

So that's where we've been, and I think we have to stand up and be counted. We have to stand for our

principles and our rights, for what we believe in and what we know is right. And our children have to be taught that you can't wait for the ministers to come and say, "This is right or wrong." You have as a parent and as an adult to teach young people about Christianity and about Indian religion. There's nothing to be ashamed of about Indian religion—not the Sundance and all that—that belief is different from the Indian religion. What is basic is believing in the Great Spirit and having our cultural values.

Prayer is another thing that we have to teach our children; they have to know it's good to pray. When you are troubled and you don't know what to do or where

to turn or who to ask, just pray, and you will get an answer and you will get help. And you can pray anywhere—in school, or even in a closet, and God will hear you. The Great Spirit will hear you. I think a lot of times the Indian people have faith in the Great Spirit, and they believe that he is Indian, because we pray to him in our native tongue and he hears us. (I suppose that Italians think he is Italian, and everyone believes that he is their kind.) But nonetheless, there is only one and that's who we pray to.

But we will all be better off if we work together. That's where the future is—working together to accomplish more for our people. □

Voices from the National Gathering of American Indian UCC Members

Bismark, North Dakota, June 1995

Edwin Benson

Mandan
Chair, CAIM Board
Twin Buttes, North Dakota

Edwin Benson is one of the few remaining speakers of Mandan, which he currently teaches at the Twin Buttes School. He is also active in the Fort Berthold Council of Congregational Churches, and the Twin Buttes Congregational Church. This reflection is transcribed from videotape.

I'd like to take you back to make a point about the changes from my childhood to today. I probably need to go back to about 1933 when my Mom passed on. I don't remember her, but people told me about her. After that happened, my grandfather, Ben Benson, raised me the best way he knew how. I went to school a short while. When I started school it was in the Congregational church, that's where I went to school. I started back in 1937.

From that time to today there's been a great deal of change in the Indian life, a difference between how I grew up and how kids are growing up today.

It's a fast world they live in. It seems like the summers were longer when I was a kid, and we were told to show a lot of respect to our elders, and to law enforcement, because they were the caretakers and the government of our reservation. There was probably some wrong in the federal govern-

ment, and in the tribal council, but now things are very different.

When I started school we weren't allowed to speak our native tongue; only English was supposed to be the language we used. So the children didn't speak any kind of Indian language. And now, of all people, they got me to teach the Indian tongue to children in school! Even though I'm an elder, I thought that day would never come!

The children of today are very knowledgeable about life, from a very young age. I never knew that until I started teaching and listening to them talk and the language they use. And it's surprising how young people, tell the teacher what to do. When I went to school you couldn't do that. You couldn't do that with your parents. I remember real well with my dad; I couldn't tell him what to do or tell him what I want. He told me what I wanted, and I had to like it.

But today it's different. Young people are very well educated; they learn from TV and from older sisters and brothers and the school. And the majority of young people are able to graduate high school like nobody's business and go on to college. When I went to school, we never had a chance

even to get into high school because times were hard when I was growing up.

You know that from the stories that the grandfathers told about how they grew up. Talking about the religion back in them days, there were beliefs like belief in God in heaven, but you had to be careful talking about the bad spirit—Satan is what they call it in the English language. And in those days you were told to be careful about how you worked with the Native American medicine. It gets me worried when I think about what people were told.

But there's a lot that's different. My dad never got to see a lot of the things that I see. Imagine staying right at home and people bring our dinner right to us! That was something unheard of back in the days when I was growing up. When I see the meals that are passed out here by the church folk, I know how much life has changed, and I realize that the Lord will provide for us.

I thank all of you who keep this kind of church work going. It has changed life for a lot of Native American people. And that's all about my life on the Fort Berthold reservation. □

Voices from the National Gathering of American Indian UCC Members

Bismark, North Dakota, June 1995

Tom Iron

*Standing Rock
Sioux-Hunkpapa
Eyapaha (Camp Crier)*

Transcribed from his videotaped presentation.

I'm going to speak from the heart. I'm Tom Iron, I'm a Hunkpapa from the Standing Rock Reservation, and I come from the family of One Bull, Sitting Bull. When I was asked to come, I was asked if I was interested in being at this gathering. I had two powwows scheduled for this weekend, but I arranged for someone to do my powwow for Saturday. I respect my people, and they honor me.

When I came back from Vietnam, the first person to welcome me and shake my hand was Charlie White, who invited me to this meeting. I was honored.

A powwow is a spiritual thing for all of us, a healing process for our elders and our youth. We have seen healing through gatherings at powwows, emotionally, physically, and spiritually. It helps our Lakota people, our Native American people. It's not just beating on a drum and dancing.

I will do a powwow in a prison soon. We gather with the inmates each year, and I think that many of them that are incarcerated have come forward to say that they have accepted God, the Great Spirit, and it has changed their life around. Many families come and gather with them, and it's great to see

them when you go in. I've gone every year for the last seven years. I look forward to seeing one of my friends there because he was in Vietnam with me in the First Recon battalion in Vietnam. We were an elite force of a Marine Corps unit, and now he's a prisoner in a penitentiary. Going to the powwow is my way to see him every year.

It really touches me to be here because one of the things I really enjoy is gathering with others. You get a lot of hugs and handshakes and smiles when you go to a retreat and get to know a lot of people. I wanted to share and be a part of the fine people here.

I was a Christian in my younger days, and I think I experienced a real sad moment in life when I lost my mother. I used to pray a lot when she was dying of cancer. When she died I gave up God. I was suicidal, and I went to alcohol. I actually went to Vietnam to die, but somehow I made it back. I drank for twenty-five years of my life, just gave it up ten years ago. I haven't drank for ten years.

In Vietnam I didn't pray at all until one day when things got worse, and then I prayed. But it was like those two Indians who wanted to cross the river, and the current was going very swift, and one guy said, "Well, I'm going to pray." And he asked the Great Spirit to

help them get across safely, and he promised to pray each day and go to church each Sunday. But his friend poked him and said, "You know you won't do that," and the first one said, "Don't worry, I'm just fooling him."

I think that's what I did. I went on, not going to church, but when I sobered up I started going back to church and went to many reservations and started sharing my experiences in life, especially with youth. Right now I'm in the process of getting an adolescent treatment center going on our reservation, where we can work on alcohol and drug prevention for our Native American children, and hopefully someday we'll have a good program at the Indian Reservations in the Aberdeen area. That's what I'm hoping. It's going to take many years, but it will happen.

I'm kind of lost for words. You prepare yourself, plan it all out, and then the next thing you know your plan just goes down the drain. It's a learning experience. One of the things we do in a retreat is take off our watches and our fancy jewelry. In the Native American way, the Lakota way, you don't wear watches or jewelry or glasses when you come to pray; you're just yourselves. My adopted father from Alberta, Canada, says that when you're going to pray to

God, you have to take your shoes off and be there on Mother Earth.

Praying together is a healing process. It enriches us in a spiritual way. Last winter when it was 25 below [zero] we came here for a spiritual retreat. We sang together and prayed together. When we started praying I found that the greatest experience of my life. It felt like there was a dome around me, and lights on top of my head, and a voice said to me, "Go up to the front."

But there was nobody there. But I walked up to the front where they were praying for people, and I put my hands on the head of this woman and I started praying and I looked around and she was lying

on the floor. And it scared the heck out of me. But it kept happening, one after the other, and I started crying and they asked me to talk, and I told them what I experienced. It was great, a powerful retreat, and we all had a great healing experience. We were all joking and laughing when we went home. It didn't matter how cold it was. We were recharged.

I see that a lot of people talk about how people lost the Lakota religion when they went to boarding schools, and they had to learn other languages and other ways and become members of other religious organizations. There was a lot of anger in that. They didn't learn parenting skills, and they

lost their culture. And when you hear elders speak there's anger because of what was taken away from them in those schools. Just recently they've started to have workshops on how to deal with anger from the boarding school days, and you can see people between forty and sixty years old getting up and talking about what was done to them.

It's great that a lot of these things are happening. And it's great to see the United Church of Christ coming up with publications that have the beautiful Indian designs and the circle of life on the cover. Now we're using both ways—the Lakota religion and the learnings that we have found in our own beliefs. □

Courage In The Struggle

Rosemary
McCombs
Maxey

Pastor,
Mt. Tabor UCC
Rocky Ridge, Maryland

When Rigoberta Menchu, a Quiche Indian of Guatemala, received the 1992 Nobel Prize for Peace, she said, "I consider this prize not as an award to me personally, but rather as one of the greatest conquests in the struggle for peace."

I wish I could be as gracious, but I take special pleasure in receiving this award. I'll start with saying that aside from being a Muscogee (Creek) Nation citizen, a country pastor of an all-white congregation, an educator at a private, liberal arts college, a spouse, and the mother of two teenaged sons, I am also a generalist, with a high tolerance for ambiguity and inconsistency, including that which I find in myself. I am a shy person who often feels silenced and invisible in the presence of people who are comfortable with the way things are, yet I often am compelled to speak. On my good days, motivated by love and anger, compassion and justice, cowardice and courage, I am obsessed with exploring the gamut of human meaning in life.

Social and spiritual truth is practical and is best told by those who are victims of and resisters to the status quo. Sharing ideas with these beings who have survived genocide and oppression can be revolutionary, edifying, and illu-

minating. I believe that societies, especially domineering ones, can be changed, not by adhering to the system's polite vocabulary of metaphors that restrain and choke truth, but by de-provincializing our minds and transcending the values and principles espoused by the dominant culture. Telling the truth—whether we can actually fully participate in it or not—is our duty. That is, to *do justice* and to *be just* is our duty. I desperately want justice to be made available to all of creation and all created beings. I want all of creation to have "voice with vote."

I believe that Creation was made whole and can be again if we can all join hands in leaning to be courageous and do acts of courage in the struggle for justice and peace. For me, among the acts of courage in the struggle is to advocate for the rights of indigenous peoples, those who are descendants of the original inhabitants of lands now controlled by political systems in which the indigenous ones have little influence. It is their bodies of knowledge and corresponding codes of value, evolved over many thousands of years, that will ultimately lead to the return of integrity to creation as our Creator intended.

The acts of courage will be for us

to join together in the spirit of resistance against principalities and powers, and against the continuance of "business as usual." The act of courage I would like to advocate is to deal with the issues of land and land recovery, where indigenous people can exercise control over the use of the land and subsoil and defend against the invasion of commercial interests where once indigenous people exercised sovereignty and thought carefully of the seventh-generation-yet-to-come before they took actions which affect the land.

While this is a global justice issue, I limit my remarks to the United States. To speak of Land Recovery creates apprehension, and some may react fearfully to discussions of this issue, but I need to appear courageous and worthy of this Just Peace Award. I will therefore stand beside a man named Ward Churchill, a Muscogee/Cherokee scholar, author, and leader in the American Indian Movement, who, writing in *Z Magazine*, (Vol. 1, No. 3), says,

There are certain implications to Indian control over Indian land which need to be clarified, beginning with a debunking of the "Great Fear," the reactionary myth that any substantive native land recovery would automatically lead to the mass dispossession and eviction of individual

Given at General Synod (1993) when Rev. Maxey won the OCIS Just Peace award.

geoning majority of Third World urban poor. This too is cultural genocide and signifies that indigenous peoples are yet nonpersons, even in the light of the gospel of liberation.

God in Place and Time

In *The Power of the Poor in History*, Gutierrez argues that God reveals God's self in history. I assert that this is not only not a self-evident truth, but that Native American theology that is true to our culture must begin with a confession that is both dramatically different from and exclusive of Gutierrez' starting point. Essentially, a Native American theology must argue out of spiritual experience and praxis that God reveals God's self in creation, in space or place and not in time.

The Western sense of history as a linear temporal process means that those who heard the gospel first have and always maintain a critical advantage over those of us who hear it later and have to rely on those who heard it first to give us a full interpretation. This has been our consistent experience with the gospel as it has been preached to us by the missionaries of all the denominations, just as it has been our experience with the political visions proclaimed to us by the revolutionaries. The problem, from 16th-century historian

Las Casas to Marx, is the assumption of a hegemonic trajectory through history that fails to recognize cultural distinctions. With the best of intentions, solutions to oppressed peoples' suffering are proposed as exclusive programs that don't allow for diverse possibilities.

Whatever the conqueror's commitment, to evangelization and conversion or to military subjugation and destruction, it was necessary to make the conquest decisive—at military, political, economic, social, legal, and religious levels. And just as the conquest had to be decisive, so too must modern revolutions be decisive. They allow no room for peoples who consider themselves distinct—economically, politically, socially, and culturally—to find their own revolution or liberation.

A prime example was the situation of the Miskito Indians in Nicaragua during the Sandinista revolution. Summarily relocated from their coastal territories, where they had self-sustaining local economies, to high-altitude communal coffee plantations, Miskito peoples were forced to labor as culturally amorphous workers with no regard to the abject cultural dislocation they had suffered. The Miskito Indians had been a people; the removal from their land reduced them to a class whose cultural identity could not be a factor.

Whether in capitalist or socialist guise, then, history and temporality reign supreme in the West. On the other hand, Native American spirituality and values, social and political structures, and even ethics are rooted not in some temporal notion of history but in spatiality. This is perhaps the most dramatic (and largely unnoticed) cultural difference between Native American thought and the Western intellectual tradition.

The question is not whether time or space is missing in one culture or the other, but which is dominant. Of course Native Americans have a temporal awareness, but it is subordinate to our sense of place. Likewise, the Western tradition has a spatial awareness, but it lacks the priority of the temporal. Hence, progress, history, development, evolution, and process become key notions that invade all academic discourse in the West, from science and economics to philosophy and theology. History becomes the quintessential Western intellectual device.

If Marxist thinking and the notion of a historical dialectic were finally proven correct, then American Indian people and all indigenous peoples would be doomed. Our cultures and value systems, our spirituality, and even our social structures, would give way to an emergent socialist structure

in Columbus Day protests. They have given me permission to tell their stories.

Adrian tells about the day he became angry. He and his friends were discussing the discovery theory when Adrian quoted the well-known cliché, "How can you discover an already inhabited place?" Having successfully defended himself to his peers, he was quite pleased. But one of peers needed a second opinion, that of the unsuspecting math teacher. "Who really discovered America?" the student asked. The teacher quickly replied, "Norsemen." Adrian having had his fill of such ignorance, walked up to his desk, firmly put down a nickel and said, "Buy yourself a clue!"

One might look at this and see a self-serving, disrespectful teenager taking a chance that could be dangerous, with severe consequences for his permanent record; however, I stand in solidarity with my son. I know how it feels to be "the only one." I know how annoying and exhausting it is to take the stand which is forever challenged. I also know the responsibility that one bears when you take a stand not only for yourself but for your people. Our people are made visible by our actions.

Acts of courage need support systems—friends and family who

will listen and help put you back together when you have acted alone. Acting alone is dangerous. I have been taught by some of my clergy sisters never to meet with one in authority or power alone, because he or she will use the plays of oppression to disempower and disorient you. Take somebody along so you have someone to check in with, to talk over and evaluate the meeting and to help restore you. Courage in the struggle for justice and peace requires a supportive network of friends.

Sometimes people tell us that the problems we think we have are imaginary ones; that we are crazy in our perceptions of the way things are. My son, Truman, taught me the value of listening deeper than hearing just the words. When he was in fifth grade, came home from school one day saying he was discriminated against because of his race. "How can that be?" I asked. "Did somebody call you names? Make fun of the way you are dressed? Or the way you wear your hair?"

"No," he said, "It's much worse than that. We had a lesson on the explorers and settlers and not one word was said about Native Americans." Prone to be very dramatic, my son lowered his head and said, "Day after day, I sit in the classroom and no one mentions my

heritage. I am truly discriminated against."

While I thoroughly appreciated the drama of this recitation, I know in my heart of hearts that he speaks a truth. The truth is that discussions of history, matters of race, of environmental justice, of religious freedom are devoid of mentioning Native Americans. Day after day, my silence condones discrimination against Native Americans. Our perceptions are not crazy. They are reality based. From my two sons' courage, I have re-fortified my own. My family, my friends, my heritage, my Creator sustain me. The courage in the struggle for justice and peace grows from within, and is supported and nourished from without. Speaking up from a place of urgency, serving as a supportive model for others, and trying to balance out acts of justice are all important.

I have spoken here primarily about Native American issues because we so seldom get this kind of opportunity. But we do not have the corner of the market on needs for justice. All of us who are treated less than equal in this world need justice.

May all of us accept God's gift of courage, give support to one another, and act with courage. Amen. □

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